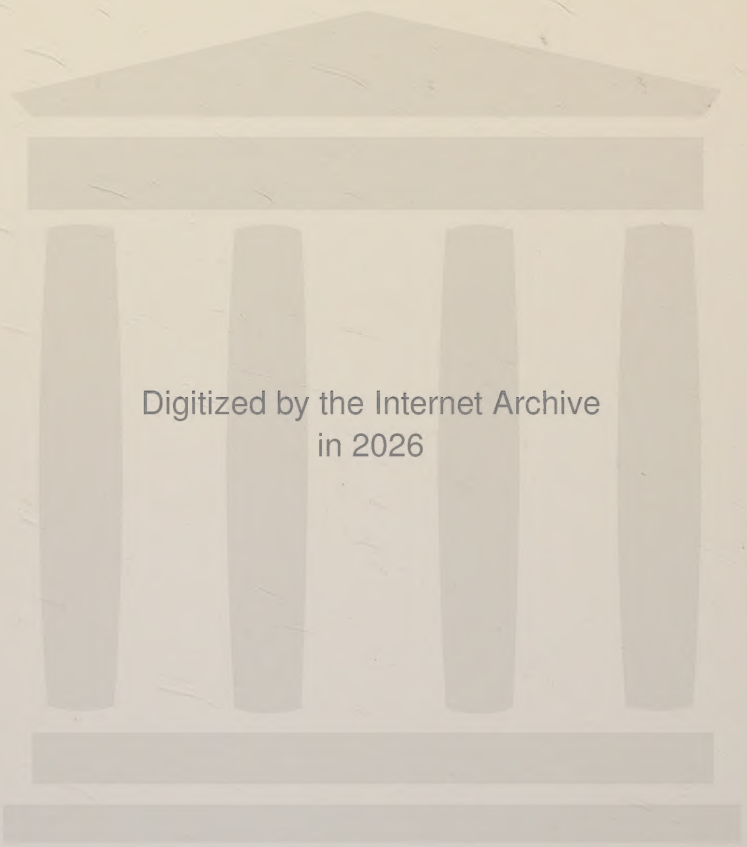
ACCORDING TO SAINT JOHN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ACCORDING TO SAINT JOHN

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BY

LORD CHARNWOOD

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I dedicate this essay
which can only claim to be adventurous
to the dear memory of
GEORGE RIDDING
Forty-third Headmaster of Winchester
First Bishop of Southwell.
I cannot tell what unexpected but illuminating
comment he would have made on its conclusions
but I know how much whatever is workmanlike
in its argument or worthy in its aim
is due to him.

PREFATORY NOTE

TO THE AMERICAN EDITION

My special thanks are due to Mr. Ellery Sedgwick, who has most kindly assumed the responsibility of correcting the proofs of this book. Without this great help, which must have been laborious, this edition could not have appeared at the same time as the English edition. I must also thank Mr. M. A. DeWolfe Howe, because without his encouragement and insistence I do not know when I should have finished the book. Many other friends have helped me with advice while I have been writing, but I name none, since I do not wish to make any of them even appear to be responsible for my views.

CHARNWOOD

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ACCORDING TO SAINT JOHN

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I

INTRODUCTION

HAVE the long controversies about the Gospel according to St. John led to any real results? If so, can an ordinary reader use these results so as to learn more about our Lord?

When a man whose special studies and experiences have lain in fields far away from those of the theologian turns to such a subject as this, he exposes himself to the risk of making many blunders and it is unlikely that his knowledge will at all points be up to date. But he has some advantages and may use them. On some much debated questions he will welcome the right answer — that we do not know. He can dismiss erudite speculations of the futile kind more boldly than theologians are permitted to do by the courtesy now common among them. Above all, his very inexperience may keep more fresh his sense of what he is really seeking, which is to discern more completely and more clearly the lineaments of the historic Jesus Christ.

"These books," said Erasmus, "bring back the living image of that most holy mind, and Christ himself . . . the whole of him, is here so rendered present that you would see less of him if you beheld him before your eyes."

Now there are questions about the New Testament which criticism of sources and study of antiquities will not help us to solve. Little or no light can be thrown, by settling the origin of any document, upon that puzzle concerning miracle which seems to be appointed for Christians of our time; for the ready belief of one man, the robust incredulity of another, and the uncommitted wonder of a third in this matter do in fact remain as they were before, when any possible eyewitness has been admitted or rejected. Again, it is not possible so to piece together and reunite the fragmentary narratives of the Gospels as to supply in our Lord's case those biographical details which a modern writer might think of the first importance in composing for a cyclopædia an account of some slighter figure. But the Gospels, with their splendid brevity, have seemed to many simple minds, as they seemed to the great humanist, to tell incomparably well things about this historic figure, in relation to which these unanswered questions become trivial and tiresome. Will the Gospels seem to do so less if the full light of modern humanism, with all the new facts and new queries of which it has to take account, be turned upon them, or will they seem to do so more? I believe that the true answer is the latter; and the slight study which follows is an attempt to illustrate this in some small degree.

That study falls into two parts, of which the first is concerned more directly with the Fourth Gospel itself and with matters which have an obvious bearing upon it, while in the second I must travel further afield. The questions on which the first part — ending with Chapter IX — must touch may be set down in order thus: —

(1) Can it be shown that this Gospel is early enough for a disciple of our Lord to have written it or directly influenced the writing of it?

(2) What is the value of the testimony which associates it with a particular disciple, the Apostle St. John? Incidentally, it is necessary to speak of the view which — to my mind, fantastically — ascribes the Gospel to another man of the same name.

In dealing with these two questions I may pass over some points which have at one time or another been much discussed, for I cannot bring myself to treat very seriously the doubts which still subsist about these two questions. On the other hand, I shall dwell longer than might seem needful on certain points in past controversy, because of the light in which they set the whole subject of the origin of the Church and its beliefs. And I shall not hesitate to insist upon some matters which are already very well known to scholars. They are not well known to the general readers to whose interest I would especially appeal; and it is the besetting sin of aspiring special students to treat that which is well known or obvious as if it did not exist.

(3) Does this Gospel purport to be simply history? Or is it dramatic — or even, as some have thought, allegorical — in its intention? In general, the literary character of the book has hardly yet been enough considered.

(4) Does consideration of the above matters lead us to regard the Gospel as actually written by St. John, or rather as the composition of some followers of his, no doubt possessed of recollections of his and inspired throughout by his teaching?

The latter suggestion must not be thought to be far-fetched or to be a sort of compromise. Some such sort of mediate authorship is a thing of very common occurrence. We meet with it in infinitely varying forms in the recorded teaching of Socrates, in that of Aristotle,

in textbooks on many branches of knowledge, and in innumerable dispatches and reports of modern men of state. Again and again, the man whose name is attached to a writing was certainly not the actual writer; and yet it may be none the less certain that substantially it has his authority and is the expression of his mind.

Personally, I incline to the opinion that the Gospel according to St. John is not his direct handiwork, though I would not say the same of St. John's Epistles. Nor do I at all think that the sense of disillusionment, or even pain, with which many people might at first receive this view is one which will remain after full consideration — far from it. But all the same I am bound to express an even more unacceptable opinion: I think this is a question which we must be content to leave in some doubt. Such conclusions as we need to come to about the historical value of this Gospel should allow for the doubt.

(5) Having in mind this doubt, and the various doubts which consideration of the nature and purport of this Gospel may suggest, may we still use it for any strictly historical purpose at all? I feel sure that for the only really important historical purpose here, that of learning more about the true figure of Jesus of Nazareth and the spirit of His teaching, we may use this Gospel with confidence, though not necessarily without thought and study as far as matters of detail are concerned.

This, of course, is the real gist of my book. But I prefer to handle the matter rather briefly; not, so to speak, to dwell lengthily on the subject myself, but to offer my readers a clue which they can follow up for themselves.

Here I might have ended, but I have been led to extend my study over a wider range. I had come without

hesitation to the conclusion which I express in Chapter IX about the view which this Gospel presents of our Lord; and it is not, so far as I can make out, a very different conclusion from that at which scholarly people studying this Gospel itself and with no fixed preconception about Christian doctrine, generally arrive. But I am struck by the persistence with which many theological students seem to brush aside any such conclusion on general grounds; whatever conclusion, they seem to say, you might draw from a mere study of this Gospel, Jesus of Nazareth did not at all conceive of Himself as it represents, for research shows that that whole conception of Him was wrought into Christian belief after His time, under influences quite independent of Him.

Now it would not, I think, be fair to all my readers to answer this with any curt explanation that this achievement of research is mythical. We want to have some positive idea of how that growth of Christian belief which we may notice in the New Testament did take place. Thus I shall attempt at least to outline a definite view upon certain further subjects: —

(*a*) The extent to which the presentation of our Lord's teaching in the first three Gospels may be taken as it stands, or the extent to which it has received some twist.

(*b*) The Jewish antecedents of Christianity.

(*c*) The pagan environment in which it grew up and the actual influence of that environment upon the New Testament writers.

(*d*) Having regard to all these matters, what is the place of this Gospel in the New Testament as a whole, and in the development of Christian belief? Does it, in view of all this, seem to give a remote and dim or distorted image of Jesus, if any? Or does it substantially represent the maturest understanding of Him?

If I were now starting afresh to treat these topics comprehensively, I should probably design my book upon some other plan. But I let the book go in the shape in which it has grown under my hands. That shape corresponds pretty closely to the course which my own actual study of the subject has followed, with many interruptions, during some years. Likely enough, this may make it to most readers more useful than any more ambitious effort of mine could be. It will, I hope, fall into the hands of some readers who can skip judiciously. The above explanations and a brief Table of Contents should help them to do so. Chapters VI, IX, and XIV contain the chief contributions which I hope I may have been able to make to the discussion.

Whatever these contributions may be worth, I am sure that the book is in certain respects an attempt which ought to be made. Christian thought and Christian life stand to gain by the unembarrassed handling of some of the questions on which I have touched. I will not at this point indicate why this Gospel peculiarly requires that its literary character should be more closely examined, or apologize for the momentary shock which such examination will cause some people. But in general I believe that the disappointing looseness of a good deal of New Testament criticism arises from the frequent failure of the critic to read the books of the New Testament as good books should be read. It is of course impossible for intelligent men and women, whatever be their preconceived opinions, to read such literature without peculiar feelings of reverence, yet it should be read with a no less alert mind and no less capacity for frank enjoyment than we bring to the study of any other books which we read because we want to read them. As it is, religious students of the Gospels are liable to feel the

lingering influence of a doctrine of verbal inspiration which hardly any of us now maintain in principle. Pious scholars have easily freed themselves from that influence in studying the Old Testament and even in studying St. Paul, but naturally and rightly, it is not so easy to do so when we read what is presented to us as spoken or done by Jesus Christ Himself. Nevertheless, His presence will become more clear to us through the full recognition that His life on earth was recorded by men and through the effort to understand sympathetically their limitations and their human weakness and strength. There is no necessity that every ordinary reader should trouble himself very much to do this, but preachers sacrifice something of their power of teaching and orthodox scholars hamper themselves much in dealing with the difficulties which they meet if they do not make this preliminary effort. Their failure, however, is slight in comparison with that of many who may be counted as emancipated and advanced. Microscopic examination of the Gospels and of other early Christian books is a good thing, upon condition that it does not begin by losing sight of their more obvious features; and the main requisite for the study of any author is, first, to let him tell his story in his own way.

One more word of preface. This is primarily an essay in historical criticism. I approach my whole subject in the cool temper of such criticism, so far as I can. So far as I can. The mind is not made in water-tight compartments, and the critical student of Christian origins who professed that his studies in no way excited him would really be boasting that his brain did not function properly. Moreover, if it be the result of these studies to bring us into a presence which to the normal mind is dear, and awful, and strangely near, that result is a fact

of science, to be reported and reckoned with as such. But strong feeling is one thing and illusion quite another. I have long and earnestly tried to free my mind from illusion in these matters — an effort which I believe to be part of the religious duty of a Christian.

II

THE QUESTION OF DATE AND THE OLDER CRITICS

The evidence that the Gospel according to St. John proceeded from the Apostle of that name consists of what we are told by several writers in the last years of the second century, corroborated by certain passages in the Gospel itself or in the First Epistle of St. John, which seem intended to point us to the same conclusion. But those who, for various reasons, think the contents of this Gospel unlikely to have proceeded from an Apostle, set aside the authority of the said writers as being too late, while the passages just mentioned are the subject of much dispute; and formerly at least it was often alleged that traces of this book in other writings are not to be found so early as they would be if it were really Apostolic. It will be convenient to speak first of its date, without reference to its authorship, and to state first the results of evidence which is all but undisputed.

This Gospel was written later than the Gospel according to St. Mark, for it contains passages in which the writer evidently had St. Mark before him, though none which make it certain that he knew either our first or our third Gospel. This may be taken to prove that it was written after 70 A.D., which was the date of the destruction of Jerusalem. There are also features of it which suggest that when it was written the influence of

that great catastrophe had been felt for some years, and there is some force in the tradition of the Church which regards St. John's as the latest of the Gospels. There is no reason to question the general verdict of scholars now, which would fix the year 90, or some would say 80 A.D., as the earliest possible date for the appearance of this book. Nothing really turns upon the particular conjecture which we may think likeliest upon this point. Perhaps it should be recalled that it is a most elaborate work, presumably begun long before it was completed.

What is the latest possible date for its completion? There was a time when very impressive authority consigned it to the period between 160 and 170 A.D. The indisputable evidence of references to the book found in other writings has long since made this opinion untenable. To-day there is indeed a minority — negligible, for reasons soon to be given — of scholars who contend for a rather late date, soon after 132; but all other critics would agree in saying that clear references to or quotations from this Gospel in writers of the second century make it certain that it was written by 130 A.D. at the very latest — which does not mean that any of them think it was anything so late. Clear-cut evidence, such as quotations furnish, does not carry us beyond this point. There are several passages in Ignatius and Polycarp, who wrote by 115 A.D. at the latest, in which we may fancy that the writer echoes this Gospel or the First Epistle; but while, if any two of us consider these passages, each will probably feel sure that (say) one of them is a quotation, it is improbable that we shall both fasten upon the same one. If, however, we assume that the very brief literature surviving from the early Fathers does not quote this Gospel, though it certainly quotes St. Matthew's and St. Luke's, this has no significance. The

writers a little later who do quote St. John quote other Gospels far oftener. It is exactly the same with the literature and common speech of to-day; and the reason is that the occasions when quotations would be to the purpose are immensely more frequent in the case of the other Gospels. Somewhat similarly, a man who liked *Antony and Cleopatra* best of Shakespeare's plays would very likely not quote it often, but could hardly escape quoting *Hamlet*. The appeal which this Gospel makes to people is of a peculiarly intimate nature; emphatically it belongs to the class of books which people are inclined to keep for their private consumption; emphatically also it does not belong to the class of books which are handy for the purposes of general instruction. It was of course not published as a canonical book; for the writers of the New Testament and for their contemporaries the canon of inspired Scripture closed with the Book of Malachi. It had to win its way, and its character makes it obvious that the interval between the writing of it and its widespread recognition as one of the most valuable Apostolic writings must have been longer than in the case of a book like St. Matthew, of which the greatness is so different in kind.

Search for this class of definite external evidence has led to this: that St. John's Gospel must have been written before 130 and may have been written long before that date. Meanwhile, maturer consideration has dismissed, as merely fanciful, speculations as to the influence upon the doctrine of this book of schools of thought which might suggest that it did not belong to days of pure Apostolic Christianity. To fix its date more closely still we must rely upon the impression which it makes upon educated minds familiar with the earliest Christian literature, a kind of evidence which concerns

its authorship and not its date alone and is bound up with the interpretation of the book. It is enough to say that here again there exists no reason for doubting the general, though unconcerted, agreement of the best scholars of our day, which would, roughly speaking, give us 110 A.D., or the middle of Trajan's reign, as the latest possible date.

But it is now worth asking why there is, or was lately, a minority which still contends for a much later date. I have called them negligible, not because they are few, but because their argument on this point appears to me wholly without weight. Their contention involves the denial that quotations and references to this Gospel in writers of the middle of the second century are rightly regarded as such. In days when books did not easily stay open quotations were generally loose. It may often be a question whether a particular sentence shows quotation or chance likeness of phrase. In this instance any unprejudiced reader can sample the argument sufficiently by taking the text of Justin Martyr and, with it constantly before him, comparing the contention of (say) Dr. Stanton, that certain passages are quotations, with the contention of Dr. Schmiedl in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, that they are not. He will certainly conclude that the latter is kicking hard against the pricks of conviction in desperate loyalty to a lost cause. He may then perhaps wonder why the precise year 132 has been selected. He will find it is because in that year the unfortunate Bar Cochba, who was proclaimed as the Messiah, headed the last melancholy insurrection of the Jews against Rome, and Dr. Schmiedl tells us that our Lord's words in St. John, v, 43, "If another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive," can be nothing but a reference to this event. Now this argument passes beyond the

bounds within which ordinary human reason operates. To the ordinary mind, given the preceding words, "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not," the saying that the Jews would welcome later a leader whose appeal was of a more earthly sort seems to follow naturally, as a prophecy which any competent observer of affairs then present in Jerusalem might have made. The Bar Cochba argument, fortified as it requires to be by the rejection of quotations from St. John which occur too early, is the only tangible evidence now offered of a late date for this Gospel. It is worth notice for two reasons: partly because it is an example of a peculiar irrational strain, common in minute critics who have lost the larger appreciation of what they read; but still more because, when clever men can argue so, it shows how strong is the lingering hold of a discarded theory about the New Testament generally, to which I shall now turn. I refer to it not for the sake of slaying the slain again, but because I think that we have something to learn from its history.

Under the spell of the tradition which this now obsolete theory has left behind it, much critical literature has become vitiated by a craving to dissent, with or without reason, from whatever older tradition has held. And under the same spell a large part of the educated world in England is probably inclined to assume that some critical theory of the sort called "advanced" has been established by research. Ferdinand Christian Baur may fairly be described as having made the first important attempt to apply modern scientific scholarship to the origins of Christian belief, and doubtless, if those of us who care to do so can understand the New Testament better than did our forefathers, we owe it partly to him. He was looking for an explanation which should seem

rational, from his point of view, of how the conception (venerable to him) of the eternal God made man for man's redemption had come to link itself with the memory (also venerable to him) of Jesus of Nazareth. For this purpose he framed, in the light of his views as to the general course of human thought, a connected and complete hypothesis of the literary history of the New Testament. If views which dissociate St. John's Gospel and its doctrine of the Christ from any personal follower and friend of the actual Jesus seem to us plausible, that is, with most of us, far more because Baur's hypothesis about the whole New Testament impressed the educated world very deeply, than because of any facts which research has disclosed in regard to this Gospel in particular. The bold comprehensiveness of Baur's theory and the elevation of his mind gained for his views in the generation preceding our own a prestige, among educated men averse to an unthinking orthodoxy, which it is well now to remember; for though the present generation may generally have forgotten Baur's name, it has largely been brought up with a feeling about the New Testament of which he was the chief creator. It was entirely reasonable for him to put forward some such hypothesis as he did put forward, to be tested by a detailed study of all the relevant facts, which has necessarily been the slow work of many minds. But that slow work, as it happened, destroyed his hypothesis altogether. It has continued long since without disclosing good evidence for any one of the various later hypotheses which, like Baur's, would displace the older and simpler view of the New Testament. Whether the dictum of the New Testament be credible or incredible, no educated person ought now to imagine that its testimony to our Lord's teaching has in some sense been explained away by research.

Baur was inspired by Hegel's doctrine of the history of thought, according to which each new stirring of men's ideas results in a conflict between two opposing schools, each founded upon a partial truth, and in an eventual harmonizing of the two in the acceptance of a completer truth. This doctrine has of course been applied in many other fields, and has proved, for instance, in the history of Greek philosophy, no less misleading as a cast-iron rule than it is upon many occasions illuminating as a hint. The key to the understanding of the New Testament lay for Baur in the conflict between St. Paul — endeavoring to base a new world-religion upon the personality of Jesus Christ — and St. Peter and the rest, good Jews to whom Jesus Christ was just the Jewish Messiah. This conflict could be seen in full swing in certain Epistles of St. Paul, which accordingly neither Baur nor anyone since ever doubted. What preceded it was obscure to him. All those books of the New Testament in which the full acuteness of the conflict could not be seen must, he inferred, be the products of a later time, in which reconciliation had set in and men were inclined to pretend that there never had been conflict at all. It was a natural view enough — in spite of some glaring difficulties about it — that the Gospel according to St. John, as unfolding in all its fullness the central idea of Christianity in language which evoked the sympathy of a philosophic mind, required several generations of Christian thought to prepare for it. A very late date was assigned to it, not in disparagement of its historical authority, for Baur thought it did not really pretend to that, but in acknowledgment of its spiritual greatness.

It is well to grasp these two facts about our whole argument: first, the tendency of critics to deny any close

connection between this Gospel and any Apostle has from first to last resulted from considerations of general principle, such as have been roughly indicated above, and not in the least from any actual discovery made by patient research. Secondly, the theory upon which this Gospel has been so treated involved equally, to the powerful mind which conceived it, a relatively late dating of most of the other New Testament books. To Baur all the uncontentious Epistles of St. Paul, and of course both the Epistles of St. Peter, appeared spurious; the Acts was a late work, making believe in relations between Paul and the other Apostles which never existed; as to the Synoptic Gospels, curiously enough, St. Mark's seemed to him the latest and most untrustworthy.

Such, in brief, was Baur's position. With doubtful and unimportant exceptions, later study has shown him to have been mistaken about every book concerned. It was soon demonstrated that St. John's Gospel was in use a full score of years before, in Baur's view, the time could have been ripe for it to be written; and more recent researches, as we have seen, have pushed the date yet further back, so that critics who (if the phrase may be used inoffensively) seek to explain the book away, now seek this object by other means than impugning its antiquity. It has been demonstrated beyond all question that St. Mark is the earliest of the Gospels. One after another of the Epistles of St. Paul which Baur set aside has been recognized by an increasing number of critics as genuine; so too has the First Epistle of St. Peter. The Acts has come more and more to be acknowledged to be what upon the surface it appears. Very definitely, then, the theory as a whole falls to the ground.

It would be going too far afield to dwell here for more than a moment on the fallacious observation with

which it started. It assumed that between the older Apostles and St. Paul — with his deep speculative vision and his clear perception that the time had come for Christian teaching to aim no longer primarily at converting Israel first — there was a division more sharp, more profound, and more lasting than Paul himself says in the very Epistles upon which the theory is based. It supposes a Paulinism which Paul indignantly repudiates. This Gospel, the accompanying Epistles, the Acts, and the First Epistle of St. Peter — which is of considerable importance in this connection — were relegated to a later period simply because it was assumed that Paul's thought of Jesus Christ stood out of relation to any strain of thought of which the leaders of the original Church were capable. This assumption does not merely go beyond any existing evidence; it goes against indisputable evidence. Paul himself shows no conception that he is preaching anything save that very faith of the original Christians whom once he had persecuted.

One result, it must be added, of the whole tendency to find late dates for New Testament books has never excited so much remark as its marvelous character demands. Even in the restricted form in which this tendency now survives, it leads scholars to put not only St. John's Gospel and Epistles but the Ephesians, the Pastoral Epistles, the First as well as the Second Epistle of St. Peter, and that speech to the elders at Miletus (Acts xx, 18–35), which is among the two or three greatest of orations, well on into the second century. A most interesting consequence follows. We possess several undoubted writings, besides fragments, of the Christian literature of the period in question; and, though they have their very true merit, none of them are worth reading now except for purposes of special study. We are

asked to believe that the associates of these mediocre writers had now and then the happy thought of composing what (to use a slang term which conveys the requisite minimum of censure) we may call "faked" books, and that, when they did this, they invariably rose to a level above that of their times, and in the majority of cases produced what ranks with the greatest literature of all time — *quod est absurdum.*

The significance of all this is really that the foundation upon which a large part of the educated world have based their view of Christianity has given way. According to a current impression, modern research has shown that the central idea which through many centuries has in fact animated Christian piety was the product of a generation which had not known Jesus of Nazareth, and was connected with Him only by what may be called an accident of history, while the actual Jesus is a figure mainly lost in the mist of legend. But this impression must not be supposed to have been verified by the results of learned inquiry. Its original basis has been abandoned and the place of it has certainly not yet been taken by any coherent and thought-out view resting on ascertained facts that can support any similar conclusion.

I am not here assuming that no such view can ever arise. Yet it is surely time that all enlightened and emancipated inquirers should make trial of a different clue from that which their predecessors have followed. Admitting that legends of wonder may have grown up more quickly round a revered name than was once recognized; admitting too — what no one ever doubted — that "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" must have undergone a great development within their own stirring lifetimes; may we not suppose, as the real clue to the history of the New Testament, that this

development was in its essentials completed under the still-felt impact of the personality of Jesus Christ? In the case of this Gospel, may we not suppose that precisely that depth and elevation of thought which Baur took as the mark of a later generation resulted from the mature comprehension of our Lord by one of those who had known Him best on earth?

III

THE DIRECT EVIDENCE AS TO AUTHORSHIP

In approaching the question of whether this Gospel, besides being early, comes to us with the authority of an Apostle, I shall deal at some length with evidence which is rather familiar but of which the real bearing and weight seem to me to have been strangely overlooked. Some insistence on this point may have the advantage of making the early days of Christianity seem a little more real.

Our earliest information that this Gospel was the work of St. John comes from several writers in the close of the second century, by which time the Church (the numerous local congregations of Christians, acting with felt unity and much mutual correspondence and intercourse) had almost completed that gradual and informal process by which certain treasured books now forming the New Testament were set apart from all others, however early, as authentic records of the Apostles and their teaching. Among these writers were Irenæus, a diligent, experienced, much traveled man of practical good feeling and good sense; Clement of Alexandria, a man of much learning, a singularly interesting author, whose liberality secured him in the eighteenth century the distinction of being decanonized; and Tertullian, a less attractive person, but of marked intellectual and philosophical force. All of these men were capable of what now seems strange

credulity: Tertullian in Africa believed that in the Imperial Record Office at Rome there were certain "Acts of Pilate" which corroborated the Gospels; Clement appealed to supposed prophecies of the Sibyl; Irenæus buttressed his main contention for a "fourfold Gospel" with such arguments as that a cherub has four faces — which perhaps a very clever man would not have used in any age. They are all, none the less, excellent witnesses upon matters which the course of their life brought within their nearer ken. Of course no one of them knew of his own knowledge that a certain man had written a certain book a hundred years before, nor should we pay much regard to their critical opinions in the ordinary sense of criticism; nevertheless, the cause which made these different men in different parts of the world agree in a certain belief about this book is well worth our attention; and hearsay cannot always be dismissed as mere hearsay when we know how it came to be heard.

First, then, it should be noticed that the beliefs of Clement and Irenæus about this particular Gospel come to us with corroboration. St. John was not a mere name to them, as the majority of the Apostles probably were. They understood him to have ended his life in Asia, where he wrote his Gospel, dying at a great age at Ephesus in the reign of Trajan; and each has a characteristic story to tell of the old Apostle. Irenæus' testimony is especially striking. His own earlier life was passed in Asia, and either as a boy or — as he more likely means — in early manhood, he with his companions, to one of whom he wrote about it long after, had been accustomed to listen to various elders who had known John and other Apostles, but above all to Polycarp, whom he remembered most vividly, recalling with emotion "how he would describe his intercourse with John and with the

rest who had seen the Lord, and how he would relate their words." In corroboration of Irenæus, somewhere about 190 A.D., Polycrates, who was bishop of Ephesus and then an elderly man, spoke of the "great luminaries" who had died in Asia, in a passage which is in some respects puzzling but which clearly means that John the Apostle died at Ephesus, and which, though not in so many words telling us that he wrote this Gospel, identifies him with the disciple who reclined on the Lord's breast. Of course, if all this information were false, the testimony about the book would be greatly shaken, and I shall have to return later to the contention made that it was false. For the moment I will only confess that to me this evidence of Irenæus, borne out as it is by Clement of Alexandria and Polycrates, seems the sort of evidence which can be dislodged only by very direct evidence to the contrary.

But the matter does not rest for us, and did not even rest for Irenæus' mind, uncritical as in some respects he may have been, on his personal reminiscences and those of one or two others. It rests upon a widespread tradition, the worth of which we must now consider, and as to which Irenæus happens to be very explicit. Apart from what he himself had understood from childhood, Irenæus received this Gospel as St. John's and as one of four authoritative Gospels, because, together with the other Gospels and like other New Testament books, it had been similarly received for a long while back in a number of churches with which he was acquainted, in different parts of the world, in each of which he was satisfied that there had been from the beginning what he thought vitally important for a church, namely, a regular succession of church officers whose express business it was to guard the tradition of faith received from the Apostles. There can be no doubt that this regular

succession of ministers did exist; or that the purpose of it was to carry on unbroken that function of "bearing witness" which seems to have been regarded by the Apostles themselves as their own distinctive function; or that watchfulness as to the kind of books which were used in public teaching and as to the authority given to these books was a part of the duty of the ministry; or that it was into the hands of these constituted ministers that written communications to a local church in any place came (whether from the first missionaries and evangelists of Christianity or, soon after, from other local churches), and through their hands that what had reached them went on to other churches; or, lastly, that by letter and personal visit constant correspondence between these congregations was maintained in regard to their belief and practice, making the scattered local churches one Church, and their traditions one tradition.

Such was the authority on which Irenæus, who had lived successively in Asia, in Rome, and in France, accepted this Gospel. Such, without doubt, was the authority on which Tertullian in Africa and Clement in Alexandria accepted it. Such was the reason why, somewhere about the same time, the composer of a document known as the "Muratorian Fragment" felt entitled to draw up what we may call a canon of the New Testament, including all the books of our present New Testament except the Revelation. Questions of course had been raised about the authority of these books, and competing scriptures had been put forward. A fragment preserved from about a generation earlier tells us that there were unauthorized scriptures, and that attempts were made to tamper with the genuine ones. This fragment itself proves that there was also vigilance against these dangers. Particular schools of Christians, or

people on the confines of Christianity, had disputed one Gospel or another; one rejected St. John and retained the rest; one rejected St. Luke and retained the others, including St. John. Those who rejected this Gospel appear to have mistaken its teaching hopelessly, and been led thereby to an absurd conjecture that it was the work of one Cerinthus, of whom more hereafter. We know enough about them to warrant the conclusion that they impugned it solely because they doubted its doctrine, and not because they had any other reason for disputing its authenticity. On the other hand, all that we know about that main current of early Christian opinion which resulted in forming the canon of the New Testament goes to suggest not that it selected as authority what squared with its doctrine, but that it fashioned its doctrine upon what reasonably seemed to be authority. When Clement of Alexandria says that orthodox belief is what was taught in the Apostles' days, and that the mark of heresy is its comparative novelty, all our surest evidence bears him out. The eccentric speculations from which the Church turned away, so far as they are known to us, were emphatically not descended from what is most certainly known to us as Apostolic teaching. The main body of Christian people down to Clement's time, so far as we catch glimpses of them, were, for good or for evil, not inclined to adventurous speculation. What seem to us their extravagances could plausibly plead excuse from those passages of undoubted New Testament books which we ourselves find it hardest to understand. Nobly, if not with intellectual brilliance, we see them striving to keep the unity of a great fellowship, based upon the faith once delivered to their fathers. These people cannot have been careless about their books. Were they stupid or silly about them?

What has been said shows that the tradition about books which was accepted by 200 A.D. was anything but that kind of loose tradition which we often associate with the word, by which anecdotes and winter-evening tales pass down from one generation to another, not without a disposition to improve them. Long before then it had become an integral part of the tradition concerning the Christian faith, for the conservation of which a strong organization had long existed. Doubtless it was not infallible. We must consider a little more closely in what respects it affords us very good and in what respects it affords us somewhat precarious evidence, and must look at such indications as we possess as to whether, in regard to what were shortly to become sacred books, this tradition was an effective force from the very first.

The strength and the weakness of our evidence both appear from the circumstances in which books of the New Testament came into vogue. The reception of any writings other than the Old Testament Scriptures as having authority came about gradually, with the gradual passing away of a state of things in which the spoken word of the Apostles and their chief associates was the one authority for Christian belief. The writings of these books, great literature as most of them are, was not the work of men who thought of themselves as authors, but was incidental to their work of teaching and guiding the young churches. Those who received the first three Gospels accepted them as steps taken by accredited teachers for the maintenance and improvement of a systematic teaching which in its origin had been oral only. Those who received the Epistles and who read them out in church gatherings, preserved them for further reading on occasions and furnished copies of them to other churches, accepted them as coming with a certain authority,

as a dispatch carries the authority of a Minister who may or may not have actually written it. But in either case the interest which we now take in the individual authorship of the words would first begin to be taken at a time when the question of that authorship might have become unanswerable — as actually happened in the striking instance of the Epistle to the Hebrews. To this extent, then, it is reasonable to look out for mistakes in tradition; and in fact we may be sure that tradition was mistaken in regarding our St. Matthew as earlier than St. Mark and in ascribing it, in its present form, to St. Matthew. Yet in this very instance we have reason for guessing that the mistake was not a wild one; for an earlier tradition, preserved by Papias, tells us that St. Matthew's real part in such work was the making of a collection of sayings of our Lord, similar to (we may suppose) if not identical with that which is incorporated both in our St. Matthew and in St. Luke, and in the former in the more prominent and impressive fashion. In any case, the conditions which have thus been described make it very unlikely that tradition was wrong when it ascribed to a book of importance Apostolic authority in a general sense; and it is not very likely that it would have linked a particular name with a book if there were no real reason for connecting them at all.

We have no lack of indications that the tradition which tried to preserve the Apostles' teaching was a very living and vigorous thing. It is not, I think, at all fanciful to see such an indication in the marked characteristics of our first and third Evangelists, who combined a book which is substantially our St. Mark with a book of sayings, while each of them added matter from some other source. Each has his own individual view of and interest in his great subject, but they have two points in

common. First, each combines in a curious way a considerable freedom of editing where he chooses with an habitually close verbal adherence to the two texts that he is incorporating — which is startling when we consider the literary power with which each was plentifully endowed. This points on the one hand to confidence in their own knowledge of their subject, and on the other, to reluctance in substituting new words for those familiarly taught and learned before. Secondly, while we may be almost sure that neither was an original disciple, Jesus Christ is not becoming to them (any more than to St. Mark, or, one may perhaps add, the writer of the book of sayings) a titular and dimly remembered founder of their religion, to whose name moral precepts, doctrines, and tales of wonder were, as it were, inorganically attached. Each — by no possible accident — has in his own way portrayed a great, living Presence. We may believe, if we see cause, that the myth-making tendency had long played round the remembered personality; but as it is evident that these authors, in succession to others, wrote to give form and permanence to a vigorously cherished tradition, so too it is evident that the life of that tradition lay in the very real memory of a very real being.

Before a hundred years had gone by, the Church generally had definitely formed a list of Christian writings which, to the exclusion of all others, shared with the Old Testament the character of authoritative Scripture. But we have glimpses of an intermediate period when, though not yet fully invested with this sanctity, the books of our New Testament were coming to be distinguished, as records of the Apostles' teaching, from an increasing literature of other kinds. Books nearly as old, including, along with others of less value, so beautiful

a Christian work as the Epistle ascribed to Clement of Rome but written in the name of the local church at Rome corporately, were preserved and valued, but were not given the same rank, because in fact they were not the direct record of Apostolic authority. Several Apocryphal Gospels found readers, but acquired no authority, in spite of their laying false claim to be memoirs of particular Apostles. Heretical Gospels were set aside as forgeries; this there is no doubt they were. Certainly the discrimination thus made between books was happily guided. Whatever tests it used, it in fact repelled legends of a childish grossness which we know were circulated early; and it kept the tone of moral precept high, where it might easily have declined toward a worldly and uninspiring prudence. "Demand not back that which is your own," says the uncanonical moralist, adding with unquestionable sagacity, "You will not get it." "Be kind," he exhorts us, "and men will be kind to you." But "that ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven" is the one motive of canonical Scripture.

May we not guess that this tendency to choose the best implied a tendency to choose that which came in fact from the highest source? Such a guess derives strength from this incontrovertible fact that, wherever we know the early Church to have rejected a book as (whether good or bad) not Apostolic, it was quite obviously right.

Altogether, it is not a light thing to set aside the tradition which had become fixed by the end of the second century, in the case of a book like this. Perfectly solid evidence, such as convinces us that St. Mark's is the earliest of our four Gospels, may compel us to depart in what is after all but a slight degree from that tradition,

but in the main its authority is very great. We can indeed picture to ourselves processes by which some slight writing might acquire an authority which did not belong to it — for instance, through being copied out, to utilize valuable space, on a roll where a short authoritative writing had first been copied, and being taken by later copyists as by the same author. But let us try to represent to ourselves plausibly the sort of way in which a long and elaborate Gospel first got foisted on one of the early churches, and (in the face of an active system of teaching which had real authority) came into general use, with an authority attaching to it to which it had not the smallest claim. I doubt very much whether the instances, abundant as they are, of demonstrably forged or wrongly ascribed literature supply us with any real analogy which will make this process comprehensible to us.

The testimony of a plain and obvious sort given by the book itself can be dealt with more briefly, though of this it must be said plainly that it is absurd to disregard it. I am not here speaking of the direct statement about the author in xxi, 24. Whether the postscript which this whole chapter constitutes was added immediately after a conclusion had been reached in xx or not, and whether it was written by the same hand that wrote the Gospel or not, — questions which can by no possibility be settled, — this particular verse avows itself as an insertion by another hand; and whoever inserted it does not unambiguously lay claim to special information about the authorship of the Gospel. Different views are possible as to this verse, but the one view which it is impossible reasonably to hold is the view that qualified witnesses of the facts related are here certifying to their truth in a sort of attestation clause and omitting to give any force

to their attestation by their names or any indication of who they are.

But leaving this isolated verse altogether aside, we must recognize that the writer repeatedly lays claim, in effect, to possessing peculiar and authoritative means of information. Is this an artifice? The question is one for common sense to decide upon a broad review of the passages concerned as a whole. If it is artifice, it is very subtly and thoroughly carried out; not merely by the references to the "beloved disciple," and the reference in xix, 35, "he that saw it," which may refer to the same or to another eyewitness; nor merely even by the repeated introduction of vivid touches which seem to come from eyewitnesses; but also by the ingenious affectation of departing from St. Mark in detail, yet (to the eye of a critic) with clear reference to him. This surely is too crafty a subtlety to be attributed to the writer. Surely too the whole procedure here supposed is entirely incongruous with the intense earnestness and sincerity of conviction upon the whole which are utterly unmistakable in this book. Moreover, the book must plainly be taken in connection with the first Epistle of St. John; and in that Epistle, in which the dramatic element and the high degree of conscious art that must be recognized in the Gospel are quite absent, it would surely be, in the eyes of any practised and intelligent reader of books, most absurd to suppose that the writer sank from his level of high simplicity to put in the words about "that which we have seen" for the sake of making his letter seem that which it was not.

The "beloved disciple" may be taken to be the actual writer or to be the informant upon whom the writer depends, but we are certainly intended to take him as one or the other. And a little consideration makes it evident

that we are meant to take him to be the Apostle John.

Let us recall the very plain reason which makes the ordinary reader of the New Testament assume that the beloved disciple is St. John. This Evangelist deals far more readily with individual personalities than do the rest. Out of those seven Apostles of whom nothing beyond the name and occasionally the trade and family is mentioned in the other Gospels or the Acts, four at least, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, and Judas not Iscariot (and if, as is likely, Nathaniel is Bartholomew, then five) are brought in, apparently from a pleasure in speaking of them, and with the effect upon the reader of at least some acquaintanceship. Judas not Iscariot, of whom the mention is slightest, asks in the greatest of all dialogues the question which to most of us seems the most interesting. And Thomas is an instance, beyond all others, even in the literature of the Hebrews, of a character made real with a few strokes. "Except . . . I will not believe." "Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?" "Let us also go, that we may die with him." Many thousands have made his acquaintance gladly, perhaps reflecting, when they think of the sentence last quoted, that he and they could find that way after all. Peter, too, has a great deal said about him. This being so, it is really startling that from beginning to end neither James nor John is named. Nor in the first twelve chapters do they ever seem to be alluded to unless, as is possible, that other follower of the Baptist who, besides Andrew, met with Jesus in John i, 35–40, was one of them. But then as the story comes to a climax a disciple not named comes persistently upon the scene as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." There is also a mention of a disciple who was known to the high priest, and

again of "that man" who "bare record" in John xix, 35. Each has been taken to be the beloved disciple, but that is not clear; and it seems to be more natural to suppose that another man may be indicated — conceivably, of course, two men. But the beloved disciple stands out clear as, along with Peter, chief of the secondary figures. It is flatly impossible to suppose, in view of all this, that the Evangelist, writing as he most certainly did with St. Mark before him and for readers who knew St. Mark, did not intend those readers to identify the beloved disciple either with St. James or with St. John. But we must observe that St. James died early, whereas this disciple is very clearly intended to be taken as having inspired or written this book long afterward; besides which, in Chapter xxi he is marked as a man who lived long. St. James is thus excluded, and St. John remains.

We can hardly help wondering why there is no mention of St. James. Perhaps there really is. He might be St. Andrew's companion in i, 40; he might also be the disciple known to the high priest, who brought in Peter. I think that he might be "that man" who "knoweth that his record is true." The term might perhaps be used because he had written his testimony, as we use the present tense of dead writers; or it might be bad Greek; or it might be said of him as not the less living though having died; so the child in Wordsworth used language. Again, one can imagine that some deeply tragic lifelong emotion made it hard for St. John to speak of his brother. We do not know. Only, in passing, let it be noticed how irrational it would have been for any forger, with the skill to introduce those references to St. Andrew and the rest, to suppress or seem to suppress any mention of St. James.

Anyway, it would seem impossible to an ordinary man

to regard the unnamed disciple whom Jesus loved as any other than John the Apostle, whose name is so prominent in the other Gospels and is significantly omitted here. Nevertheless, critics with great reputations attempt to show that this disciple was someone quite different, who was not one of the Twelve, and whom the other Gospels ignore altogether. Incidentally their argument discredits the tradition that St. John lived to old age in Asia, and is to that extent adopted by many who would not follow them further. It is therefore necessary to consider it a little; and to this remarkable feat of criticism we will turn in the next chapter.

IV

THE "ELDER" AND THE ADVANCED CRITICS

THERE is commonly supposed to be good authority for saying that there died and was buried in Ephesus a certain Elder or Presbyter John, who was not the Apostle but who, like the Apostle, was an original disciple of our Lord. It is suggested, then, that Irenæus and others, who were taught by men who had associated with this Elder, mistakenly supposed him to have been the Apostle, whereas, it is urged, the Apostle John never was in Ephesus.

I start with the disadvantage of not believing that the elder in question ever existed at all. Belief in him is derived from Eusebius, who discovers a reference to such a person distinct from the Apostle in a passage which he quotes from Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, who wrote probably between 130 and 140 A.D. Papias, as he tells us, with evident justice, was a remarkably stupid man, and the passage in question is a slightly rambling boast — not without a sort of confused eloquence — of the extent of his inquiries from or about the older generation, in which the name John occurs twice over. When Eusebius construes him as referring to two different Johns, I believe that, as may happen to a scholar reading the words of a less educated man, he has failed to catch his drift. But as scholars from St. Jerome to Dr. Stanton

have followed Eusebius, I ought to assume that I am wrong. It should be added that Eusebius guesses that the second John wrote the Revelation, while the Apostle wrote the Gospel.

Assuming his existence, it is quite likely in itself that this Elder John resided in Asia. On that point Papias tells us nothing, but Eusebius conjectures that the Elder died at Ephesus, because he had heard it reported that two tombs of John were still shown at Ephesus in his own time. Here, of course, he implies that the Apostle also died at Ephesus, and believes that he wrote the Gospel there.

The next step in the argument is to throw over the authority of this last statement of Eusebius as regards the Apostle, while retaining as a fact the suggestion taken from it that the distinguished Elder died at Ephesus.

The further steps consist in ransacking the literary remains of eight centuries for trifles capable of suggesting that the Apostle died earlier, or died elsewhere, but in any case not as an old man at Ephesus.

One argument used for this purpose has become almost famous under the name, "the silence of Ignatius." Ignatius, the bishop of Smyrna who was taken to Rome to be martyred there in 115 A.D., or perhaps earlier, wrote seven Epistles. These moving letters of an original and forceful man were all written at stages of his journey toward martyrdom, under the high stress of a splendid excitement. One of them was written to the Ephesians. None of them mention St. John, and scholars have wondered — not so much perhaps at the mere fact, for he mentions names of the past very little, as at the absence of St. John's name at a particular point in the letter to the Ephesians when he does mention St. Paul. Is this really strange? In the first place, I should be inclined

to remark that Ignatius' writing is saturated with reminiscences of St. Paul's Epistles; and in the second place, that, great as is the space occupied in our minds by the work of St. John's old age, when his residence is said to have been chiefly at Ephesus, we know of no reason why in those days the thought of Ephesus should have suggested his name quite so readily as that of Paul, the great founder of the Church then in Asia generally. But whether this be so or not, Ignatius is certainly full of the thought that he is on his way to suffer for Christ in Rome, where, as he certainly reflected, Peter and Paul had suffered before him. This being so, consider the three passages where alone he does name any Apostle. In one, which need only be mentioned for the sake of completeness, he speaks of his knowledge that the risen Christ is in the flesh, and of how our Lord "came to those with Peter and said, 'Take, touch me, and see.'" In a second, which we must note, he is writing to the Romans to whom he is coming, and refers humbly to how Peter and Paul had previously come to them with the like fate impending. In the remaining passage, which has occasioned such surprise, he tells the Christians of Ephesus, through whose city he will pass to martyrdom, that they are "the halting place on the road of those who are being taken up to God," and proceeds: "You are sharers in mysteries with Paul, the hallowed, the martyred, the worthily blessed, upon whose tracks may I be found when I meet God." He was very literally upon St. Paul's tracks. Now, indeed, in our familiar letters or in those which we write under emotion, some concealed association of ideas often makes us mention one name and omit, without any significance in the omission, some other name which might seem as proper for mention, but here the association of ideas which causes one name and

no other to be mentioned is staringly visible. Scholars have naturally looked to see whether there was anything about St. John in Ignatius. The accident that there is no mention of him is nothing.

In choosing several further specimens of these alleged pieces of evidence I am making a fair choice, for, except that I avoid those which it would take longest to state, I am choosing quite at random. I must add that all the arguments of which I am about to complain are taken from scholars of high repute, of deserved reputation. I begin with some of the arguments relied upon by Archdeacon Charles in his most interesting commentary on the Revelation.

A writer of the tenth century A.D., picturesquely called George the Sinner, said that Papias (the early Father "with exceedingly little mind") had stated that St. John was killed by the Jews. It is also probable — not certain — that an untrustworthy writer of the fifth century had attributed the same statement to Papias. It is really doubtful whether Papias ever did make this statement, which both Eusebius, who makes full use of him, and Irenæus would have been likely to repeat if he did make it. Let us assume that he did. Dr. Charles, assuming further that he was right, thinks it proves that St. John died before the destruction of Jerusalem, because after that no Jewish authority had lawful power to put anyone to death. But did the dispersed Jews, often a most turbulent people, cease altogether after that date to kill people unlawfully? We know that both before and afterward they did murder or massacre many thousands. Again, did not Christians often, as in the case of our Lord ("whom ye slew"), speak of a person as killed "by the Jews" when the Jews had instigated the official Roman persecutors against

him, as it is probable that they often did? And lastly, may not Papias, whose unlovable credulity blended traditions of some worth with chatter that was silly and obscene, have accepted uncritically, thirty years after the event, just that sort of baseless legend which most of ourselves have heard gravely repeated about the death of Lord Kitchener? This evidence, too, is nothing.

Very likely St. John was killed; the well-known detailed stories about his death belong to pure legend; but, by the way, Dr. Charles does not prove it by pointing to our Lord's words to the two sons of Zebedee, "Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of." Naturally and properly, ecclesiastical thought has since associated this phrase with those many who have faced death literally for Christ's name, and have spoken of the "cup of martyrdom." But it would be jarring, if it were not a merely careless anachronism, thus to limit the meaning of our Lord's words. Surely, in the Lord's own thought, His cup could be drunk, His baptism received, His cross borne, without the assistance of the executioner. But very likely St. John was killed. The question is whether he was killed early. And Dr. Charles's chief reason for thinking that he was, seems to be that he reads Clement of Alexandria as stating that all the Apostles were dead before the death of Nero. Now in the passage in question Clement of Alexandria is insisting that the heresies are of late and the faith of early growth. The heresies in question began, he says, in the time of Trajan, but the "teaching" of our Lord "ran to its close" or "completed itself" (the Greek word is not exactly translatable; it is sometimes used of death, as in "he finished his course," but is here used not about the end of anybody's life but about the completion of a mission) in the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius, and "the teaching of the Apostles" did

so in those of Claudius and Nero. He is making his point with some rhetorical exaggeration, for he clearly speaks in the context as if our Lord had been teaching under Augustus — that is, before 14 A.D. There is no doubt a corresponding looseness in what he says of the Apostles' "teaching" if we believe, as I do, that long after Nero's time there was living, necessarily in comparative seclusion, an aged Apostle whose teaching signified much to a good few people then, and in a literary form has signified immensely to after times. But in a broad sense the teaching mission of the Apostolate had run to its fulfillment. The great initial work of founding churches throughout the Eastern Empire, in the capital of the world, and perhaps as far west as Spain, was done. The whole foundation of the faith had, as Clement unquestionably thought, been well and truly laid when, about 65 A.D., Peter and Paul died at Rome under Nero. Even then, if this were all that Clement of Alexandria had to tell us, we could not safely read him as saying that none of the Apostles survived Nero. As a matter of fact, startling as it would be to anyone who first learned it after reading this argument of Dr. Charles, this same Clement proceeds a little later in the same work to give us the most interesting information which we possess about St. John's life in Asia long afterward.

Dr. Charles has another ground, besides St. John's alleged early death, for thinking that he never went to Asia. There is somewhere a statement that the Apostles at some period had agreed to carry their preaching in different directions and that while some did go to the Province of Asia, St. John went far East. So he can never have gone to Asia! This is exactly and precisely as if some historian hereafter should reject a tradition that Lord Bryce was well acquainted with America upon

learning that after a distinguished early career at Oxford he went to Mount Ararat.

I turn to a recent book on this Gospel by Professor Burney of Oxford. His main contention, of which I will not attempt to judge, is that it shows signs of having been originally composed in Aramaic. If it was, he remarks, it cannot have been written in Asia. Why should not its necessarily long composition have begun before the writer settled in Asia; or why should he not have written Aramaic in Ephesus as easily as modern Jews write Yiddish in London? But this learned author has made a further discovery. Irenæus, he argues, meant always by "John," not the Apostle, but the famous Elder, for while he always speaks of Paul as the Apostle, and once or twice applies that term to others, in his many references to John, he more often calls him the Disciple of our Lord. Now, if he actually called John the Disciple all through there would be nothing surprising in it; the name Apostle or Missionary was not used from the start as a sort of title exclusively belonging to thirteen persons and as the only proper designation of any one of them. It is not used in St. John's Gospel at all. The word then constantly used, "disciple," has now and must have had for Irenæus a peculiar appropriateness to the disciple whom Jesus loved. As against St. Paul, who was an Apostle, it was the distinction of St. John that he was a Disciple in a sense in which St. Paul was not. But if this usage of Irenæus had been in ever so much need of explanation, no conceivable number of passages in which he had spoken of St. John under any designation whatsoever could by any rational process be made to count against the single passage — there are parallel passages — in which, as a matter of fact, he speaks of St. John expressly as the Apostle,

and with express reference to him as the writer of this Gospel.

Probably few students of such matters who learn that some great authority has reached certain conclusions realize that great authorities are given to reasoning of this kind.

I will take a last example of it from the great Dr. Julius Wellhausen, whose work on the Mosaic books is well-nigh a work of genius, but who in later years has applied himself to St. John. He, like Dr. Charles, thinks that John the son of Zebedee died rather early, and thinks further that John perished with his brother James. St. Luke in the Acts, having mentioned St. John a little before, relates how Herod "killed James the brother of John with the sword," quite certainly implying that John survived. Dr. Wellhausen "cannot help suspecting that Luke has here suppressed some names." St. Luke was an eminently picturesque writer, and it is impossible to imagine the (necessarily discreditable) motive which should make him suppress what would have made an impressive end to his several impressive references to St. John as second among the Apostles. This is an amazing piece of suspiciousness; and the authority upon which St. Luke is overridden is more amazing still. There is indeed an extant statement or suggestion (one only) that the two sons of Zebedee were killed together. It is not the supposed statement of Papias, which has been mentioned; it is an inference from that supposed statement, frankly put forward as a mere inference, by Georgius Hamartolus eight hundred years later.

There could be no better example of a vice which microscopic research seems often to induce, that of abnormal suspiciousness toward the evidence which suffices ordinary people, coupled with abnormal credulity

toward evidence which is trifling or null. And the whole mass of evidence against St. John's residence in Asia is null. This is not one of those many instances in which indications separately slight collectively amount to an impressive or conclusive argument. Every one of these pieces of evidence by itself must be evaluated at nothing. And nothing may be added to nothing forever and ever, but the sum will still be nothing.

The critics who indulge in arguments such as these are ignoring all the while the plainest fact in the whole problem, namely, the reference in this Gospel to a certain disciple who, if we attend at all to the Gospels, can be none but the Apostle John, the son of Zebedee. The advocates of the theory which is supported in this manner include a number of men of the very highest reputation among the New Testament scholars who are reckoned to be "advanced." Moreover, it would be easy to find among the writings of such scholars other, equally astonishing examples of the same kind of work. It is unfortunately plain that a large class of those New Testament critics who may be supposed without offense to aim at being enlightened and up to date, condone on the part of themselves and their colleagues work such as would gravely discredit a man occupied in other branches of literary or historical study or in any of the physical sciences. This must not of course prejudice our examination of any important view, seriously maintained, with which we may meet later; but I confess it emboldens me to pursue my own line of inquiry without troubling much beforehand as to what critical theory can at the moment cite the most imposing list of recent authorities in its favor.

We have been considering evidence which, outside the ranks of theology, no reasonable man would dream

of setting aside except for very substantial and well-tested reasons. We must ask later whether that evidence warrants us in saying that St. John actually wrote this Gospel; but it certainly points to the conclusion that the book bears his authority in some quite real way. The discussion which follows, as to the character and historical worth of the book and the relation of its doctrine to that of other books in the New Testament, is bound incidentally to test that conclusion thoroughly.

V

THE MAN, SAINT JOHN

This conclusion takes us a great deal further than the mere assurance that the book has Apostolic teaching at the back of it in a general way. The individual Apostle with whom it connects this Gospel stood in a relation of special intimacy with Jesus Christ, and held later a marked position of his own in the infant Church; and he was a man whose individual character is by no means entirely vague to us. It will be well here to set down in order all these few things about John the son of Zebedee that we can gather from authorities which vary in weight but are in no case negligible — mere legends need not be noticed. I cannot, however, proceed with this piece of construction without first pausing to distinguish the two very different ways in which, in two different senses of the word "conjecture," fragments of information may be "conjecturally" pieced together. Are the fragments large or small? Do they together amount to the whole image or nearly so, or leave much to be supplied according to fancy? Are they certainly parts of one and the same image? Must they certainly be connected in this way, or can we imagine an indefinite number of other possible connections between them? Commentators often make guesses, quite worth entertaining for a while, to see if confirmation can be found for them, and then, because

they are the first guesses which have occurred to them, treat the guesses — quite illegitimately — as on that account probably true. There is a good instance in the case of St. Paul. He had, we know, "a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan sent to buffet" him, which he mentions for a purpose, without giving those details of his symptoms to which a weaker man would have treated us. He had also the "gift of tongues," a matter which, if it were more important to us than it is, would perhaps be the greatest puzzle in the New Testament. Then there was the great vision on the road to Damascus, mysterious indeed, and exciting a more profitable wonder. On the strength of this we are told that he was subject to fits or seizures, of a species for which the commentator supplies a name from an obscure branch of medicine; we are asked somehow to associate the vision with this; ultimately that brilliant and lovable but supremely credulous psychologist, Dr. William James, in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*, uses the (supposed) mentally defective genius of St. Paul to illustrate a sort of gospel of neurotic holiness. Now I am not concerned with the study of St. Paul, and still less with the relations which may or may not exist between mental instability and mental strength. The point here is this: the disease which St. Paul found so trying may have been any one of a great number; of speaking with tongues we know nothing; it was certainly no messenger of Satan that met Paul on the road to Damascus. Here then are isolated phenomena, of which one may say that they may be related in the way which we fancy, but must add that they may be equally well related in an indefinite number of other ways, and that they may be as irrelevant, each to the others, as a man's height is to his bank balance.

It is far otherwise with the scattered notices of St. John which I now approach. They may take few words in the telling, but in more than one case a large part of the man went into the doing or saying of them. They show us marked traits of his character or marked features of the effect which he made. They must be closely related in some way. In more than one way they present contrasts, which challenge remark, between qualities which we may not often associate together; but instinctively and without searching for a theory we can see them on the whole cohering together in a kind of character exceptional, but to none of us quite unfamiliar. We might describe the figure thus presented to us rather differently according to our individual sympathies and the degrees of our clumsiness in character drawing (and we need not venture on elaborate portraiture); but we should mean much the same thing; and the sort of figure which we should all have in mind represents the only way in which the data before us can be associated together.

To begin then with the first three Gospels: James and John, generally mentioned in that order, were the sons of Zebedee, a Galilean fisherman substantial enough to employ other men. Galilee, it may be noted, seems to have been a country in which there prevailed much industrious independence; a reasonable degree of social equality; a good deal of keen interest in religion, perhaps "unlearned and ignorant" from the point of view of a Pharisee in Jerusalem; where also a good deal of contact with diverse kinds of people might be had. Thus — in spite of a curiously narrow remark of Matthew Arnold's — boyhood in Galilee was not a specially unpromising origin for a literary genius; nor surely is boyhood as a fisherman. Two other fishermen, Andrew

and his brother Simon Peter, were, according to St. Luke, their close neighbors. These were the first men that our Lord called to be His nearer followers. Andrew, says this Gospel, was the first and brought Peter to our Lord. "And when he had gone a little further thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him." The abruptness of the call and of the departure, as St. Mark thus relates them, are probably, in the full sense of both words, poetic truth. St. Luke perhaps softens away the abruptness too much by the incidents which he places before the calling. It may well be that the real link with dryer facts is supplied in the Fourth Gospel, where, though James and John are not mentioned, Andrew's following of our Lord is associated with the Baptist's teaching. However that may be, from their first calling onward James and John are, after Peter, preëminent among the disciples. It should be noticed at once that they are equally the only individual Apostles in the Acts. The references to James and John, generally but not always together, sometimes with Peter and sometimes not, are not casual but significant.

Passing over an incident when apparently there are still but four close followers of our Lord, we may start with the calling of the Twelve and their dispatch upon a trial mission. Here our Lord has already His own surname for James and John; they are the Sons of Thunder, an allusion not, as in facetious quotations, to a bellowing kind of eloquence, but to some deeper quality of character. Some time after this choosing of the Twelve comes a miracle of healing when "he suffered no man to follow him [into the house] save Peter, and James, and

John." Next, these two and Peter are again His sole companions upon the Mountain of Transfiguration. After this it was John who said, "Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name . . . and we forbade him because he followeth not us," and St. Luke adds, a few verses later, how James and John wanted to call down fire from heaven upon the inhospitable Samaritan village. We know the answer in the former case, and how in the latter Jesus rebuked them, adding, according to many ancient manuscripts, which must have got the saying from somewhere, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of."

Next comes a brief incident so intensely characteristic of Jesus Christ's dealing with men, as the Gospels show it, that to dwell on each point of it is more than allowable; it is a duty for every reader and incidentally for the critical historian. They were "in the way, going up to Jerusalem"; Jesus, St. Mark tells us, walked alone before them, and already they (the whole company) were "amazed" and some were "afraid." Then Jesus took the Twelve into His company again. He had already foretold to them His Passion; He warned them plainly that He was going to it now. It was while this warning was fresh in their ears that the mother of the sons of Zebedee brought her sons to Him to ask a favor: "that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand and the other on thy left hand, in thy kingdom." St. Mark, it should be said, omits the mother, so that every reader's sympathy goes wholly with the ten, who were "much displeased with James and John." It is surely an instance, and not the only one, of our first Evangelist's fuller grasp, that he brings the mother into the scene, thus changing this piece of forward thrusting into a touching and slightly humorous incident — Poor

mother! poor young men! poor Zebedee! In any case, however, the demand of a special reward was rather the prompt volunteering of a service. They knew, if their mother did not, what lay before Him and perhaps them. It may not be an over-refinement to suggest that those who at that moment made that request showed a quicker and a deeper comprehension than had the other disciples of how He conceived of His kingdom, or as St. Mark puts it, of His "glory." The seeming vanity, like Nelson's with his "Victory or Westminster Abbey," was mainly a veiled self-devotion. Not wholly; there was real vanity or thrusting. We may recall how He met them. They are taken very seriously and quite kindly. What they are to go through for Him is put firmly; they will not flinch from it. Any assurance as to their reward is gently withheld. There is yet no sign of the rebuke, which will come as it had come on the last occasion. Everybody who has been young knows what a lasting wound the deserved check, if given without an interval, would have inflicted. And so the rebuke is held up till it gets the whole Twelve at once, and James and John can appropriate their own portion of it for themselves.

What remains needs few words in telling, but none the less it means much. After that Supper not much later, which — St. Luke tells — John had been sent with Peter to prepare, Peter, James, and John are again, for one last time, alone together with our Lord as His chosen three, the nearest to Him in the Garden of Gethsemane. We remember how the pitiless sleep of exhaustion fell upon them, and brought upon them one last justly qualified rebuke. We are to reflect what it must have meant about a man that Jesus Christ liked to feel him near in that hour.

When we pass to the Fourth Gospel, we gather that

Peter and John were on either side of our Lord, John leaning against Him, at that Supper which according to Luke they had prepared; that John knew himself to be specially dear to our Lord; that, at Peter's hint, he could at the moment when our Lord was greatly troubled ask a question which others could not ask; that (apparently) through the rest of the great dialogue he was a silent listener; that from the Cross our Lord committed His mother to John's care; that thenceforward she lived at John's home; that at the rumor of the resurrection he ran faster than Peter to the sepulchre, and long years after recalled his speed with pleasure; and that at the door of the sepulchre some shy feeling held him standing, while the slower Peter came up and went in. If we take, as is natural, Chapter xxi to contain reminiscences of his, we obtain further our Lord's mysterious words about his tarrying, and we notice the keenness with which Peter asks about John's future, and see again the loving interest with which John's reminiscences dwell upon Peter himself.

In the early chapters of the Acts, describing the first prosperous start of the Church in Jerusalem, we accordingly find these two closely conjoined. James is no longer seen, but John appears as the usually silent associate whom nevertheless Peter chooses to have with him, and whose presence is clearly felt. Yet his boldness is marked as well as Peter's. To St. Luke, by the way, as well as to the Sanhedrim, he is an "unlearned and ignorant" man, whose well-grounded assurance seems a marvel, and on the one occasion on which he appears to speak it is, along with Peter, in firm defiance of the Sanhedrim. Thus St. Luke in Acts iii and iv has set John in the foreground of the picture, which for the moment employs his descriptive power, of those early and so to speak intimate days of the Church, and therewith, except

for the briefest notice later, he has done with him. Shortly after, the historian begins to deal with the succession of events by which this little company of closely associated Jews in Jerusalem passes into a Church which is to leaven the Empire and the world.

It is by his grasp of the main stages in that great development that St. Luke has won credit as a great and true historian. Vividly as he can narrate such minor incidents as may attract him, yet till we come to the journeys in which he himself took part he is careless of completeness — and probably of accuracy — about much that would interest us now, and he has no further use for St. John in his story, except just this: that in Acts viii, when the Church has spread to Samaria, John is sent down with Peter on behalf of the Apostles, to confirm in the faith these people on one of whose villages he had some years before been wishing to call down fire. Later, when Herod has "put forth his hands to afflict certain of the Church," and kills James the brother of John — never elsewhere appearing in the Acts, but presumably, from his fate, held important — and throws Peter into the prison from which he is so soon to be delivered, John does not appear. Very likely he was absent from Jerusalem upon some such errand as that to Samaria. Very likely he was not. All we know is that, immediately after the death of John's brother, it is not John but another James, the brother of our Lord, who to St. Luke has become the next most important figure to Peter in the Church at Jerusalem — indeed, so far as Jerusalem is concerned, more important than Peter. Not long after comes the great crisis at which the Apostles and the whole Church in Jerusalem have to determine their attitude toward Gentile converts and toward the work of Paul and Barnabas. In the public assembly whose

proceedings St. Luke relates, Peter speaks, then Barnabas and Paul, finally and decisively this other James.

Of course, as has just been said, Luke's account of things has not the real completeness which his splendid power of narration may make it seem to have; but we may certainly infer one thing from his silence about St. John here, and that whether we assume his story of the council to be strictly historical or not: St. Luke knew nothing which could cause him to represent St. John as playing a publicly and overtly decisive part in the great development of that time. On the other hand, it seems probable that St. Luke has placed St. John where he placed him in earlier chapters because his was a personality that somehow counted, somehow made itself felt at that time, and continued afterward to do so.

That St. John who thus vanishes from the Acts — whether to reappear or not in a never-written concluding part of that history we cannot tell — was still a felt person, we know for a fact when we turn to St. Paul's account, in Galatians, of that crisis at Jerusalem. It is not of the great council of the Christians in Jerusalem, which doubtless did happen, that Paul has a word to say. What rather interested him was the private conferences with great individuals which preceded it and determined the issue. These great individuals were: James (not the brother of John), named first because, as appears immediately after, it was he whom Paul's opponents claimed as their head; Cephas or Peter; and John. We find here that John was one of the three exclusively spoken of as they "who seemed to be pillars" (the Greek word for "seemed" does not in itself carry any such suggestion of mere seeming, as does our word); that, with the others, his mission was yet to lie among Jews alone; that none the less he, with the others, gave the right hand

of fellowship to Paul and Barnabas as they went to the Gentiles.

After very many years the same John came again within the light of historical evidence now remaining. All the circumstances which caused the great controversy in Jerusalem had vanished. Peter and Paul in Rome had about the same time met their death. Jerusalem had been destroyed, and John sojourned far away in Asia, among those churches which Paul had founded. We can say with fair assurance that he passed times of retirement, in the little island of Patmos or elsewhere, as a dreamer of dreams and a seer of visions. We can say with absolute certainty that his main work was, even if not that of a writer, yet that of the quiet teacher of a doctrine rooted in a glowing memory of the past and marked by a vast comprehensiveness and intense concentration of reflective power. This was the hot-headed youth of whom we read in the Synoptic Gospels.

I have no hesitation in recalling here, with serious purpose, the two stories of very unequal worth known to us, which attached to the memory of this old man some two generations later. Irenæus, with his vivid memory of how John's young associates talked of him when they themselves were old, connects his teaching in Ephesus with opposition to one Cerinthus, whose (alleged) strange way of honoring the name of Jesus Christ, while depriving it of real significance, must be noticed further on. Once, Irenæus declares, John went into a public bath with his followers; when he found that Cerinthus was there he rushed out, excitedly calling to his friends that the roof would fall in on them if they stayed under it with Cerinthus. We need not have the slightest trouble in disbelieving this unpleasant yarn; for it is certain that the young disciple whom Jesus loved grew dignified when he

was old. But the story is of the type which Oxford and (presumably) Cambridge love to tell of their revered instructors, more often than not with a real affection for them. It deserves to be regarded as a lie, but it deserves to be regarded as the particular sort of lie that people tell about that sort of man. Manifestly this story was never told of an old man whose fiery vehemence had been quite tamed. Clement of Alexandria, on the other hand, tells a story which must be regarded in a different light. It should be read in the original. If it is not substantially fact, as is quite possible, then it is an example of the romance which is really sympathetic. Somewhere in his peregrinations among the churches of Asia, St. John made a convert of a boy whose promise specially appealed to him. He placed him for education as a Christian with the elders of the Church in a city which he did not revisit for some years. When he did return he at once asked for him, and the elders told him with long faces that he had departed from them and was actually the chief of a formidable band of brigands in the neighboring mountains. John's indignation with the elders was great. He told them it was entirely the fault of their own inefficient and unloving handling of their charge. Then the old man set out on foot for the mountains, quite alone. He was captured, as he had intended, by an outpost of the brigands, and demanded to be led before their chief. He threw his arms round the dreaded marauder and with little persuasion brought him back into the Christian fold.

To sum up: It matters little whether in this long marshaling of facts about St. John my own commentary is in any part clumsy; the degree of interest attaching to any part of the story and the precise sentiment or absence thereof with which we regard it are matters to be left to

each individual reader of the New Testament. But for a critical or historical purpose which cannot be altogether neglected some definite characteristics of this man's life and character are of importance, and these are really matters of fact as certain and as clear-cut as, say, that Canada is cold in winter or India hot in summer. The peculiarly dear friendship which the Master felt for him is certain. Hardly less certain, and for our purpose not much less significant, are the affection and reliance on him of Peter — a great man, when the work which he accomplished is once clearly seen. Such friendship is not given to a man whose capacity for devoted loyalty can be doubted; hardly to a man whose nature is not richly sympathetic. In his youth there chiefly stand out the blended fierceness and tenderness of his character, the former the more conspicuous in his own recorded conduct, the latter plainly shown by the feeling of others for him. That in varying and subtle ways these qualities, each in high degree, do mingle in many people most interesting to us needs no saying, nor that in crude youth they contrast strangely. But character, of course, can only be properly viewed as a thing which grows, nor does that of a man who has lived any length of time excite strong personal feeling in us if we have no inkling that his days were "bound each to each by natural piety." This in St. John's case we see clearly. There is indeed an intervening period, covering what can commonly be called a man's best years, in which we learn of him only that, bold though he might be, others outshone him quite on the more public side of an Apostle's activities, yet that he remained indefinably a notable man, who "seemed to be a pillar." Looking back and looking forward, we might infer that already he had begun to take a determined bent toward the field which his calling offered, of

deep meditation and speculation, and this without loss of the inward fire and energy of his nature or that which had given him his marked hold on live individuals in close contact with him. That he had taken this turn already is only inference. That eventually he took it, we know for certain. And in this he presents again a contrast of qualities, those of the philosopher and of a very warm-blooded man, which we do not quite so easily reconcile as the former contrast. We do not do so because in fact the philosophical temperament, as distinct from simple studiousness that happens to be turned to certain subjects, is extremely rare. Yet there are rare individuals in every generation, for whom "voyaging through strange seas of thought alone" becomes an object of manly passion, not detaching them from the interests of their kind, much less detaching them from friends, and not quenching in them a certain volcanic quality that breaks out in swift and stern decision now and then.

To this rare and fascinating type it is unquestionable that St. John belonged. And this brings us to the salient feature of his life. Whether it be that his powers did not come to full fruition till an age at which the vital fires of most men have begun to burn lower; or whether it be that the opportunity ordained for him arose for this Apostle only when, in Clement's sense, the ministry of the Apostles had run its course; or whether, as is far more likely, these causes were conjoined; the fact is certain. The work by which the world since has known him was engendered by an old man. An old man, still to be recognized as the beloved young Son of Thunder.

> Who would not give,
> If so he might, to duty and to truth
> The eagerness of infantine desire?

And lastly, I would point in this connection to one part of the writings which bear St. John's name, the First Epistle, with its two charming but slighter companions. I will not forestall my study of his Gospel nor — for another reason, that of fear — venture yet any remark on the Revelation. The First Epistle is one of those writings in which surely the writer's being seems to express itself; in that respect some other Epistles in the New Testament, notably II Corinthians and Philippians, are its equals, but no book in the world excels it. Anyone who reads it sympathetically must have the sense of knowing the man that wrote it, and the man that he sees there is the same that he will see in the fragmentary story of St. John's life.

I leave this matter here, not intending to protract my study of the Gospel by seeking verification of what I have said. I have dealt with it, first, because some reasonable preconception as to the person who, if he did not actually compose the book, must be taken to have influenced the writer chiefly, may throw a general light upon the book; secondly, because here at least is one point in which St. John enlarges our knowledge of the historic Jesus: we know the sort of man to whom our Lord's human liking turned.

VI

SOME LITERARY CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BOOK

I SHALL now set down some observations upon the characteristics of the Gospel according to St. John as a literary composition. All of these observations, though I shall elaborate some of them, are, I think, in their main substance such as would occur to any man who had read and enjoyed a considerable variety of great literature, who had not for long read this Gospel straight through, who sat down to do so with a fresh mind and — so far as possible — as he would read any other good book.

First, it goes without saying that this is a very different Gospel from any of the others. Each of those others aims at giving an answer, short enough, comprehensive enough, and therefore fragmentary in a way and free from discussion, to the questions: Who was our Master — or your Master — Jesus Christ? What did He do? What did He teach? This writer's purpose is very different. Passing over a very great deal which in those answers bulked large, he means to insist upon and to illustrate one element in them which he thinks supremely important, and which he feels is in danger of being neglected or denied. He makes this intention clear at the very start, and not in one chapter, hardly in one verse, does he loosen his hold of it. This might go without saying, but it has important consequences which have perhaps been too little considered.

Following upon this comes the very obvious fact that the Fourth Gospel is in a very high degree a compact and well-ordered whole, of which every part falls in with a design thought out beforehand. Compared with most books, compared particularly with the First and Third Gospels, each of which is a work of great literary art of a simpler kind than this and quite as beautiful, this is a work of very elaborate and very conscious art, in which — worthily and nobly, of course — the writer is keenly aware of the effect which he means to produce on you, and relies for it not merely on the substance of what he says but also on the form in which he casts it. It may be compared to great drama, though the comparison need not be pressed too hard. In a way it reminds one of a great piece of music, in which several related themes are successively developed, with at least as many subordinate themes worked in upon the way. The drama, so to call it, has a prologue in which the great subject of the whole is within a few verses, though very subtle verses, set out clearly: The Word, which was from the beginning, and which was God, was made flesh. And within a few more verses we have clearly announced three great themes, which determine the structure of the greater part of the book, and which are blended in the conclusion as in the prologue. These themes are: —

> He came unto his own,
> And his own received him not.
> But as many as received him —

we know the rest.

To say that the book is planned throughout upon a great design does not necessarily imply that the detailed execution of the design has been equally careful everywhere or has been completely carried out everywhere.

Indeed, the more magnificently wrought out the general conception of any work is, the greater is the chance that the execution of it will at some points have gone wrong or been left unfinished. Nevertheless I think that critics of this Gospel, in a near-sighted examination of the text, have sometimes found the flaws exactly where they are least present. In reading the first chapter some people have remarked on the way in which the Baptist is suddenly brought in, then as suddenly left while the main subject is resumed, then returned to, and so on; and they have asked whether the text has not got into a strange state of disorder, or whether some editor has not been combining two different documents very clumsily. But in asking this they have not observed what the Baptist really has to do with the main subject, — a point to which I shall return,— and have missed the unaccountable but powerful effect which these unexpected alternations have upon anyone who often reads the book and lets it take him along.

Again, the closely knit unity of this Gospel does not make it more unlikely that the author is giving this original form to a substance which was by no means his own. One man has very often written as drama what another had written or told as a history or a tale. Shakespeare and all the Greek tragedians did this, and I must ask later whether something analogous has not happened here. But there is one class of views as to the character of this Gospel which may at once be shut out. We need not look out here for an older document incorporated piecemeal in a new book or enriched with new embellishments, or for two such documents combined by a late editor; for theological matter thrust into an older history; or for historical tales superimposed upon an older dissertation, or anything of that kind. Two determined

attempts have been made to analyze the book on lines of this sort, encouraged, of course, by the success with which work of this nature has been done on St. Matthew and St. Luke and, with immeasurably more important results, on the Old Testament. But the results which the scholars in question think they have reached are absolutely opposed to each other, and competent scholars generally have found nothing convincing or even suggestive in either of them. It is not, however, worth while to examine this matter further, for in this case the great scholar like the ordinary reader can, if he will consider it, easily arrive at this positive result: that the general idea and purpose of the book, already spoken of, permeates and moulds every part of every chapter.

Next, the writer was a Jew. The attempts which were once made to convict him of ignorance of Palestinian geography and of Jewish life and customs have, I may take it, been answered since with a completeness which nearly — I fancy quite — demonstrates the contrary. But I have in mind here considerations of another kind. In style and mind he is an intense Jew. His very anger with his own race is that of a Jew. No Gentile, though he might dislike Jews, would have shown it in the same way; he would have felt, for example, no interest in shifting more blame on to the Jewish Sanhedrim, off the shoulders of an obscure and discredited officer from Rome. His anger is the inverted patriotism of the prophet rebuking his people. There has been much speculation as to what he may have owed to purely Gentile influences or to influences not purely Jewish, especially that of the Alexandrian Jew, Philo. But it is better to see plainly, first, what for the moment I shall only allude to briefly, his derivation from the main stream of the religion of Israel, as we see it in the Law and the Prophets. For,

intense as is his forward gaze upon a future in which mere Judaism counts for nothing, it is not without a passionate backward glance at the past. Consider, for example, what is signified by his one important quotation from the Old Testament. It stands, in Chapter xii, at what may be called the crisis of his argument, at the conclusion of his long insistence upon the Jews' rejection of our Lord. It is just because the testimony of the prophets has now been fulfilled to the uttermost that this most deeply Jewish of all the Jews who wrote in the New Testament has, more markedly than any other of them, now turned his face away from Judaism.

I speak of him as the most deeply Jewish of them because in every feature of its style this is the most purely Jewish book in the New Testament except the Revelation — far more so than the Epistle to the Hebrews or the Gospel according to St. Matthew, in spite of the interest of the former in Jewish ceremony and of the latter in the fulfillment of Jewish prophecy. To this it owes alike its unique impressiveness and a character alien to the tone of thought, ancient or modern, of the Western world. I venture for a moment on the difficult subject of literary style, for this reason: To thoughtful boys and girls of about fifteen, as formerly to grown people when there was no great variety of books, the beauty and power of this Gospel are plainly discernible. A few years later, when their stock of speculative notions, literary likings, and historical associations is larger, they are arrested by difficult and strange things which simpler readers in fact ignore, and to which they themselves have no clue, so that their former appreciation of the book gives way to considerable perplexity, perhaps some repulsion. But a further stage may come to the riper student of history and letters; it may come also to others, say,

to a man who has traveled far and, perhaps in loneliness and among strange people, read as one of his few traveling books the Old Testament. And for such maturer students the matters of bewilderment or offense go back, with more or less appreciation of what they do signify, into the background in which the simple reader instinctively left them, while the things which struck the simple reader strike again and strike deeper, being indeed those things which the whole subtle art of the writer had been employed to make most striking.

There is of course a great art of words,— if indeed "art" be the fitting name,— of which our Lord's sayings in the first three Gospels present the incomparable pattern, which, however deep the thing that is said, speaks the language of all peoples and all times. With the more elaborate, not necessarily lesser art of this writer it is not equally so. There is something in the sequence of his ideas unlike that of a Greek or Latin or English writer, ancient or modern, in prose or in verse. We may see in it monotony and inconsecutiveness, puzzling alternations, and an iteration which is sometimes very impressive and sometimes not so; and in spite of a light and vivid descriptive touch now and then, such as abounds also in the Old Testament, tracts of an almost arid solemnity, lacking that quick and constant touch on practical duty which endears St. Paul to us. These have their purpose. For the ear that is open to them the alternation at once relieves and heightens the iteration; and the iteration is not monotonous, but very subtly modulated; not unprogressive, but gathering new associations as it proceeds. The fact is that the sequence here is neither that of modern (and simplified) history nor of modern (and simplified) argument; it aims by other means, not wholly unlike those of music and quite natural to an ancient Jew, at

gradually building up an idea which, though solemn, is not arid and not unpractical.

Mark, for example, one sequence running (roughly in this order) through twelve chapters, of which any simple analysis is inadequate, the sounding at intervals of notes like these: The Life — the Light — the Life — the Wine — the Water of Life — Work: "My Father worketh" — the Bread of Life — Work ("I must work the works . . . while it is day") — the Life — the Resurrection and the Life — the Water of Life — the Light — Walk in the Light — the Darkness and the Judgment.

Mark again, how this method of composition ceases at a point to which it has all the while been leading up, and there follows a passage of five chapters inserted in the narrative, different in their style and character, and forming the kernel and the jewel of the wonderfully wrought work. Perhaps no such comment is needed on the chapters of unbroken narrative with which the whole work closes. Observe, however, that the writer does not depend for his effect upon the use of iteration alone. He has opened with the idea of the Word, the Word made Flesh; and somewhat absurd speculation has been based on the fact that this phrase, "the Word," does not recur. The author has so uttered this thought at the outset that to the simple — or to the quite awake — reader it is present right through to the end. It is somewhat as, in a certain movement of Beethoven, one single note is kept vibrating upon the double basses from start to finish. But it is a little more subtle; it is, so to speak, a chord that sounds throughout; and as in the first few verses the note, "the Word," is several times uttered before, once for all, we hear of the Word made Flesh; so once later, in Chapter vi, and again several times at the end, the note, "the Flesh," is emphasized again, not in each

case by the use of that word: the crucified Flesh; the pierced Flesh; the risen Flesh; the human body of flesh and bones with which He ascends "to my Father and your Father"; concerning all which this record has been written, that "believing, ye may have life through his name."

I have not said all of this with any notion of resolving the Fourth Gospel into something like music. But criticism of its value as an historical document in relation to our Lord must be useless unless the critic recognizes from the start the main idea about Him which with utter conviction the writer bends his whole skill to build up, and unless throughout he is intent to seek what gave the writer this belief, which is a passion.

One more feature of the Evangelist's literary composition is for our purpose significant. In the earlier chapters at least it is difficult to distinguish between the speech which he reports and his own commentary thereupon. Where exactly in Chapter one does the testimony of the Baptist cease and the Evangelist take up the tale? Perhaps we can answer with precision, but certainly not without a moment's thought. Again in Chapter iii, 9*ff*., what verses belong to our Lord's answer to Nicodemus and what verses to the exposition which follows? Commentators do not quite agree. Of course the writer was clear in his own mind, but he would not have left us in any doubt if he had thought it important to draw the line. He seems nearly as careless in dissevering what he himself says, in full persuasion that he expresses the mind of Christ, from what Christ actually said, as the old prophets were in distinguishing between "the word of the Lord" which "came unto [them] saying" such and such a thing, and the testimony which they themselves thereupon proceeded to bear. And so as the story advances, a question, at first disconcerting, arises for us, as to the amount of

freedom or license which he may be allowing himself in dramatizing his great subject. The bulk of the sayings of our Lord in the first three Gospels occur either on such occasions as the disciples could never forget, or in the comparatively quiet and systematic course of instruction, and in either case they were of a nature to bite deep into the memory. But our Lord must have said much that was very different in form, if not in substance; much also when absorbing events were moving fast, in dangerous conflict, or in an hour of tense intimacy; on one occasion we wonder whether any human ear heard the words that were said.

It is with such speech of His that this Gospel is specially concerned; speech of which it is impossible to suppose that it was remembered save in general purport and save for great but isolated phrases. Of course, therefore, its record is, in the loose sense in which I have used the word, dramatized. This fact by itself need not trouble us much. Even in a literal drama about history, the question of its worth as history depends upon the attitude of the dramatist to the event and the fullness of his probable knowledge; when he knows pretty nearly what his great man did say at a crisis, he will certainly not substitute for it the necessarily less dramatic thing which his own imagination at its greatest heat could supply. We are familiar too with the convention of ancient historians as to speeches. They will set down what was said, or what they understand to be like what was said, or what in those circumstances that man might have said, or even what in retrospect should now be said; but they surely did the first of these things when they could. It is remarkable how the two historians, Thucydides and St. Luke (in the Acts), whose speeches are most interesting, interest us most just when it is probable that they either were

present themselves or heard vivid reports soon afterward. But here in St. John it is, I think, something beyond the very obvious element of uncertainty, great or small, as to the literal exactitude of his reports, which disconcerts people; the thought of such liberties as taken with his august subject is shocking. When once it has presented itself, some people take refuge in virtually accepting for the occasion the strictest theory of verbal inspiration. Others read this Gospel thenceforward with a watchful suspicion. They look for the hand of some unscrupulous theologian of the sort of whom later days have known many, in whom zeal for standard doctrine has destroyed the sense that truth exists. Or they fancy that the book is somehow tainted with a deleterious sentimental familiarity. Any such suspicion or repulsion affords a sure way of misreading St. John's Gospel.

But such feelings exist, and they have their origin in the tone which is now natural to robust reverence. We may notice how Milton, who is truly and aptly called sublime, "falls flat and shames his worshipers," as far as he can, in the Third Book of *Paradise Lost*, and impresses nobody very much by *Paradise Regained*. He has stepped beyond a line which we cannot help drawing. On the other hand, we may notice a sublimity like nothing else out of the Bible in the conclusions of the two parts of the *Pilgrim's Progress*. It is attained by such homely images as that of a postman bringing again and again to some pilgrim's lodging his quaintly chosen emblem and his summons from an ineffable quarter, to which when the pilgrim drew near, "I saw him no more." It rises perhaps to its highest in the reticence of the passage when Mr. Despondency's daughter, Much-afraid, passes over: "His daughter passed through the river singing; but none could understand what she said." It is in this mood of

awed restraint that later religious writing has now and then become inspired. Later still we do find hymns which in a mild way dramatize our Saviour: "I heard the voice of Jesus say"; or "Jesus speaks and speaks to me." But, though some of them are by poets of no mean worth, they all belong to the weaker class of hymns, that class for which, with remarkable unanimity, the greater divines of very different schools have expressed aversion. Now an ancient Jew, though with no less reverence, and with an abhorrence of the "graven image" for which we have less occasion, drew no such line in this matter as we draw. The Old Testament dramatizes God quite freely. "The Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said —" then come two chapters unsurpassed in poetry. "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord —" and a mighty dialogue follows. Other passages go much further; in the first two chapters of Job there is an instance which jars upon no one. In the vision of Micaiah the son of Imlah there is one that uplifts and thrills, of a procedure which, when next a modern writer attempts it, will be none the less abjectly ridiculous for its probably intentional outrageousness.

However much or however little we may come to think that the Jewish writer of the Fourth Gospel makes good out of his pregnant imagination what memory could not accurately have retained, we need not imagine that this tells against his regard for truth or his absolute sincerity; least of all that it argues him remote from the living subject of his mighty theme.

I pass to a question perhaps connected with this. Two impressions which have been received by readers of this Gospel are: that which Dr. Stanton bravely avows, of an indefinable unconvincingness in the general setting and effect of certain scenes, and that, much more commonly

put in plain language, of the convincing lifelikeness of many touches of detail. The two impressions may be difficult to adjust to each other, but they do not really conflict, and to me it seems that both are true. I will say nothing yet of the former, since I must later deal at length with the main point of importance, to my mind, in which this Gospel does seem to me unconvincing, while the other Gospels, which conflict with it, do not. But in regard to the latter and more familiar of these impressions I must touch upon the theory which seeks to do away with it by turning almost every detail that seems to rest upon historical information into an artificially framed allegory of deeply veiled meaning. The most elaborate exposition of this theory comes from the courageous and high-minded Abbé Loisy; but lesser people have made play with it not a little.

Apart from any deeper reluctance which we may feel to such a view, it seems absurd to suppose that this author, who delighted in frank and great symbolism and used it touchingly and splendidly, had his mind vacant for a petty and niggling symbolism so constructed as not to tell its own tale but to tell another which was false. I do not wish to yield too far to this repugnance. When scholars who claim intimate acquaintance with the inferior Jewish writers of the time and their tricks of symbolism assure us that they clearly see some slightly fantastic significances in this Gospel, those who can claim no such knowledge will not wish dogmatically to brush aside the whole of what they say. Yet no sane literary critic would allow such matters to blind him to the intensely vivid dramatic interest of the writer in the actual history of an actual life. The Baptist's heralding of our Lord; our Lord's revelation of Himself to the Jews by words and by works; the Jews' rejection of Him; the

wavering of many who were at first attracted to Him; His fuller revelation of His mind to the few unwavering adherents; the crucifixion; the resurrection and final parting — that these things really happened, as hard fact with ineluctable consequences, this is the primary purport of the book. Any possible source of historical untruth in what it tells must be looked for in the intensity with which the Evangelist's imagination has fastened on certain of these facts, not in any kind of disposition on his part to lose his way in trivial mystifications.

Looking first at the series of miracles which he records, we can see plainly enough the true relation in which the symbolic element in his writing stands to the historical. No doubt all but one of these has in itself, or derives from its context, a significance beyond that of demonstrating our Lord's beneficent power. In passing, we may notice that the Evangelist generally takes pains that this significance should be clear. "I am the light of the world." "I am the resurrection and the life." No doubt they are selected from among the narratives of the kind available to him with a view to that significance. In or near Jerusalem our Lord makes the lame to walk, opens the eyes of the blind, raises the dead; in all this the writer asks us to see in Him the source of more than bodily activity, bodily sight, or bodily life; but this must not obscure for us the historical point which, whether he exaggerates it or not, the author is all along making, namely, that these works were done under the eyes of the Jews and that it was bitter obstinacy which prevented them too from seeing their significance. This same object is pursued later by additions to St. Mark's record which are entirely matter of fact in their spirit. What passed between the Jews and Pilate in this Gospel is given

as purely historical narrative. If it does not rest on historical testimony, it is not allegory; it is a malignant lie.

If thus in larger matters the Evangelist's interest, however poetic, is historical, manifesting indeed an intense interest in what he takes to be matters of fact, it would be absurd to approach the minor details of his narrative with the expectation that he is allegorizing, when he seems to ordinary readers to pick vivid details from real life. It does not indeed follow that he is vivid only when he is well informed. He might, for all we know, construct a lifelike story out of his fancy, to illustrate the true nature of the situation. Thus, when the blind man's parents make their bold answer to the authorities, some say this story is so vivid that it doubtless came from them; more cautious people observe that the Evangelist does not seem to have been present. Suppose that he did make up the story out of his knowledge of those Jewish authorities and his knowledge of the blunt, true sense with which common people sometimes confront their superiors — what nevertheless does follow from the lifelikeness of the story is the narrator's appreciation of real life. It is with this in mind that we ought to approach the cases where the probability is enormous that the narrator, if not present, had been in touch with many who were.

"Mary therefore took a pound of ointment of pure nard, very precious, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment." Scores of people have remarked that the reminiscence of the odor filling the house came straight from someone who was there. But the Abbé Loisy says the house which was filled was the Church (not, by the way, a conception which is very

prominent in St. John's Gospel or Epistles), and the perfume used was that of sanctity, which, he proceeds to remark, "has no price." It might be unfair to ask whether this last is the reason why the Evangelist immediately afterward mentions the estimated value; but it is in any case far-fetched to put allegorizing interpretations upon this passage at all. Here is a humanly moving story which the other Evangelists had already related in a vivid way. This Evangelist relates it again in his own vivid way, departing in several respects from the accredited record. He agrees with St. Mark in the substantial effect of the story, but he places the scene in the house of Martha and Mary in Bethany instead of another house in Bethany; he adds the name of the woman who anointed our Lord; omits the alabaster vase which Mark mentions; speaks instead of the quantity of the ointment; makes Mary anoint our Lord's feet instead of His head (not improbably, since He was sitting at meat); agrees with Mark as to the value of the ointment, supplies, in accordance with his practice of frequently naming disciples, the name of the particular disciple who grumbled at the cost, Judas Iscariot; and he shortens our Lord's answer by omitting the words in St. Mark which seem least natural, the prophecy of a world-wide celebrity for the woman's act. Remembering, what is certain, that this writer knew St. Mark's Gospel and if he were really not a person to be credited had the prospect of being confuted by it, how should we explain the close parallel and the free variations? The writer, unless giving his own recollection as an eyewitness, is repeating the story in the form in which it came to him upon authority as good as St. Mark's. For this plain-sailing explanation there is no occasion whatever to substitute one that is more recondite.

This is an average example of the method of allegorizing exposition. I will give one more, which is extreme: "The other disciple did outrun Peter and came first to the sepulchre." A common reader sees in this the charming reminiscence of an old man recalling his emotion of that morning, and therewith, as such things live in memory endeared, the little fact that once he could run fast, and the thrill with which he did so then. No, says a certain critic, this would have been "vanity unbecoming to an Apostle." With this monumental commencement, he proceeds to his own more becoming exposition. This little touch in the Gospel exhibits, he tells us, the jealousy between the Johannine and the Petrine school. Note there is no evidence elsewhere that either the Johannine school or the Petrine ever existed, and strong reason for suggesting that if they did exist they did not cultivate jealousy. It is meant to show that the Johannine school excelled the Petrine. Note that it shows nothing of the kind, since in the immediate sequel Peter arrives at the real goal first.

We need trouble ourselves no further with the distorted views of the place of allegory in this Gospel, which of late have been one of the chief resources of those who do not think it in any substantial degree historical. Whether or not there be, as I think, in this Gospel some clause also present which has here and there falsified the perspective, the common view which sees in this Gospel repeated signs of evidence got at first hand is a sound view. It does not really rest only upon the two or three details which are so often appealed to. If we review, as later I shall try to do, the broader differences between this Gospel and the rest in their account of our Lord's ministry, we shall certainly find features in which it modifies or supplements their story, not as one re-telling it

from some later point of view might have done, but as it could only have been done in the light of an independent memory of the facts. It may seem curious in a Gospel which is spoken of as specially theological, but it certainly has at some points the effect of making the story more human. Its account of the first calling of the disciples, which has already been mentioned, is one of these; the disciples do not abruptly change their lives upon the sudden apparition of a commanding figure, as in St. Mark, nor upon the persuasion of a miracle, as in St. Luke. Again, the words given us in St. Mark: "Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice," may well seem to have received (doubtless through the honest working of imagination upon memory) the addition, by a single word, of a certain artificial impressiveness, converting them into a formal prophecy of which the fulfillment is to be surprisingly exact. But in the words of this Fourth Gospel, "The cock shall not crow till thou hast denied me thrice," the "thrice" is an expression of normal speech, and the sentence possesses the natural vigor of flashing insight. St. Luke simplifies the saying, as this Evangelist does, but there are no signs that the latter had St. Luke before him. The references to persons, which are more abundant in this Gospel than in the others, are moreover often brought in when they have no very memorable significance. Upon the whole they have an unquestionable air of naturalness. It would be ridiculous to ascribe this to some forger more artistic than any other of his trade. These, like the incidents and the descriptive details spoken of and like some of the more serious additions made to the story of the other Gospels, do point to the Evangelist's command of a treasure house of real reminiscence. And they point to something further, and in some cases perhaps more certain than the accuracy of the reminiscence,

an actually affectionate interest [1] in the persons and the scenes that he recalls.[2]

I have just alluded to the kind of naturalistic, flesh-and-blood interest in men and things of relative unimportance of which one must be aware in passages of this Gospel. It is remarkable, in a work so instinct with a doctrinal interest which may seem abstract, that just the same thing may be said, though I should prefer to have found other words for saying it, of the author's treatment of his central figure. There are passages in the Gospel which I think do not suggest this comment; there are others as to which I am confident that this must be the feeling, at first blush, of any alert reader of books. Criticism must not lay too great a weight upon impressions of the sort with which I am still for the time occupied. Let it be assumed that more exact examination might dissipate them. Yet if, as I suppose, this impression has been that of very many thousands of readers, it is a weighty matter for consideration. Recent writing has made us familiar with the word, Christology, denoting a philosophic idea which the Christian Church formed in the second stage of its growth, and which it is supposed to have unconsciously clothed with a mythical dress suited to the time, but which, it is suspected, bore no real relation to that actual Galilean artisan, the founder of the Jewish sect which ultimately became the Church. Taking then the central portion of this Gospel, which is also the most highly doctrinal, an ordinary, sensible reader may ask

[1] Or, as in the case of Judas Iscariot, the reverse of affectionate interest.

[2] It may no doubt occur to us that some features of this Gospel upon which I have just been dwelling are in themselves capable of two explanations. The writer might have much detailed knowledge or he might merely — in addition to some general knowledge of his subject — possess true dramatic imagination. It may or may not be already clear which is the right explanation; but it will become so later if we find that he writes throughout with reference to an earlier history and that, when he conflicts with it, we frequently have reason to think him right.

himself: Is this intense writer's main preoccupation the spinning of an abstract Christology, or does he burn to set truly before us Jesus, "in His habit as He walked"?

VII

THE ACTUAL WRITER OF THE GOSPEL AND EPISTLES

The literary characteristics which have just been noticed in this Gospel will have an important bearing when we come to consider its use as an historical authority. On the question, who wrote it, they have this bearing: the author seems to have been an intense Jew, greatly moved by the recent rejection on the part of his people of our Lord; he refers to some minor historical details on which he seems to have information, as if for some reason they interested him much; and he displays a passionate concern for what he conceives to have been the true purport of Jesus' teaching and the true way of regarding His person. The fact that the book is a powerful work of art is evidence of this passion, and is in no way evidence of a state of mind which would lead him to any sort of fabrication. It must be recalled here that the book has been scrutinized again and again to discover whether the writer displays knowledge of localities in Palestine and of the usages and conditions of Jewish life at the time concerned; an admirable examination of this matter may be found in Dr. Drummond's well-known book, *The Character and Authorship of the Fourth Gospel;* but the answer is so decidedly "Yes" that it is needless to reopen the subject here. Recently Dr. Burney has found in the language

of the book evidence — in his own view — that it was originally written in Aramaic; in the view of other scholars, that it was written by someone whose ideas readily clothed themselves in Aramaic idiom. Of the above considerations, none tell against the belief that this Gospel is in some way attributable to St. John; some of them tell in favor of it.

When we come to ask what this Gospel really teaches us, we shall have to compare its purport with that of the other Gospels and to plunge deep into the question of certain influences which might be alleged to have moulded its doctrine and perverted its history. It is really the study of these matters which has led so many to think that no Apostle can have been concerned with the book. But since that study has the opposite effect on my mind, I shall not affect to speak as if the result to which we have so far been brought were doubtful. The claim not obscurely made by the Gospel itself, supported by a really weighty tradition and borne out by the sort of marks of authenticity to which I have just referred, forces us to think that it has in some way St. John's authority at the back of it, and conveys his testimony and his teaching.

But it does not necessarily warrant us in going further and saying that this Gospel is the Apostle's own direct composition, written with his hand or taken down throughout from his lips. Tradition was likely to be ill-informed as to that, and the testimony of the book itself is not clearly to that effect. I will at once state my own conclusions. First, I do not think that we have, or indeed are likely ever to have, the means of quite deciding this question, so far as the Gospel itself is concerned. Reasonable opinions on it are likely still to differ, and it is better to take the more cautious supposition. Secondly, I am myself strongly inclined to accept the view of Dr.

Vincent Stanton, expressed in that wise and attractive work of his old age, the Third Part of *The Gospels as Historical Documents*, that this Gospel was actually written by a follower and pupil of the Apostle. Thirdly, since this is most important in considering the testimony of the Gospel, I think it certain that the First Epistle of St. John — probably also, if that matters, the other two — was the work of St. John himself, in which I venture to differ from Dr. Stanton and from the common assumption that it and the Gospel must be by the same author.

Enough has already been said in Chapter III about the age in which the New Testament was produced to show that the kind of origin here supposed for this Gospel is a natural one, and to suggest the sort of relation in which this writer must have stood to St. John if he was not himself that Apostle. The Apostolic mission was not a literary one. It has been well remarked that our Lord Himself is but once reported to have written, and then with His finger, in the dust. Outside this Gospel the writing of records for later times was the work of a younger generation, but of one so related to the Apostles that its writings gained currency as in effect Apostolic memoirs. It had not much pride of authorship; the writers of the three other Gospels were as careless of perpetuating their own names as they — or two of them — were free in incorporating what other men had written already. The bond between these younger men and their chiefs must certainly have been a close one. There are illustrations of this in what the New Testament shows us about St. Paul, and in tradition about St. John; indeed, Christianity could not have taken root had there not prevailed in that early Christian society the spirit of loyal comradeship and loving service which the very idea of Christianity involves. But while Paul of Tarsus, at any rate in most

of his Epistles, must have used his younger associates chiefly to take down dictation, it is unlikely that Apostles from Galilee, who had lived till middle age in Palestine, had a much greater facility in Greek than an elderly, well-educated Englishman has in French. It is more likely than not that, when they communicated their thoughts in Greek writing, they should have relied on friends whose Greek was a little better than their own, as translators and secretaries rather than as mere amanuenses. We know at any rate that they were living in close coöperation with the men through whom their message was to be handed on.

Two things result from these very obvious reflections. On the one hand it is entirely likely, so far as we have at present seen, that a Gospel should have been put forth by one of St. John's followers and close associates, which claimed in substance the weight of his authority and claimed no credit of authorship for its actual writer, but was as a whole the composition of another man than St. John. It might or might not have been his express intention that one of his followers should do this; the work might or might not have been partly or even wholly written in his lifetime; a smaller or a larger part of it might be written from actual notes of what he said; it is evidently improbable that none of it should have been so written. In the case, somewhat similar according to tradition, of St. Peter and St. Mark, the difference between the two men's parts was noted by tradition; but there is a distinction between the cases, for St. Mark's Gospel purports to be a record of facts which others beside St. Peter might have remembered, while this Gospel purports rather to declare doctrine which St. John was specially concerned to emphasize. On the other hand, it is entirely unlikely that such a Gospel as this should have been thus

put forth and accepted as it was accepted, unless its claim to bear St. John's authority was in some way thoroughly justified. The writer's intense earnestness makes it inconceivable that he should have wished to do this. The writer, if not St. John, was one that loved him and must have valued St. John's actual teaching above any fancies of his own. Others knew and loved St. John and remembered his words, and without agreement on their part that this was a true way of perpetuating his teaching, it is difficult to imagine the process of floating it as a possible one.

For these reasons I do not think that this question is so important as it might seem; for any important purposes it is of more consequence to consider the real intention and purport of the book. Nor do I insist that the view to which I incline is the only reasonable view. On this particular question the reasons on either side must largely be matters of broad impression; the only proof possible would be that in course of time a critic's impression, once clearly set out and quietly considered, should come to command assent from other people, qualified by literary judgment and knowledge of human nature to judge. I shall proceed, however, to state as forcibly as I can and for what they may be worth the arguments — beyond general agreement with Dr. Stanton's view in this respect — which present themselves to me.

I must begin by recurring to that elaborately and consciously artistic character of the writing, of which I have already said much. Everybody can see the difference between the almost unconscious way in which (say) Sir John Franklin and Captain Robert Falconer Scott [1] were very good writers and the highly conscious way in which Charles Lamb and Robert Louis Stevenson were very

[1] I owe this remark on how well Franklin wrote to Scott. He did not seem aware that he also wrote extremely well; we were talking of how well Captain Cook wrote.

good writers. The Gospel according to St. John is distinctly good writing of the latter kind. No doubt one may read it without being aware of its art; it would be feeble art otherwise; but when one's attention has been directed to it, one goes on indefinitely discovering further marks of literary craftsmanship. Nor need it trouble us that the other Evangelists too show, in a sense, some art of arrangement, marshaling the acts and the sayings which they relate, each in his own fashion. The difference of degree between the two cases is obvious and is immense.

Now I would first ask whether the sustained and successful exercise of this craftsmanship is likely in a writer so aged as St. John must have been when this Gospel was finished. The best example that occurs to me of a really old man's writing is the *Laws* of Plato. That "museum of an old man's wisdom," as it has been called, is certainly, for those who can struggle through it, one of the very greatest of Plato's Dialogues, full of a riper good sense and good feeling and lighted up by passages of a simpler beauty than the rest; but in so far as the author attempts in it the art in which he had once excelled, it is a complete and dreary failure. And the like is to be expected in aged writers generally. This by itself is not decisive. It is all but certain that St. John was very old before the Gospel was finished, but we do not know how early he may have begun upon it; it is a work which may have been labored at very long, and perhaps finished off rather hurriedly at the last. The art employed, though very elaborate of its kind, is of a kind in which a diligent reader of the Old Testament would have been steeped.

Again, the mere fact that a man began life as a fisherman is no reason why he should not have acquired great

literary skill. But besides having been a fisherman he was and continued to be an Apostle, and without disparagement of the calling of a man of letters, I have the same difficulty in imagining an Apostle turned aside to it as I should in the case of a great sailor or soldier with the chance of active service. There remains, indeed, the possibility that some such cause as prolonged illness or imprisonment debarred him, while his faculties were still adaptable, from the more active exercise of his apostleship, and turned him into a stylist, as wounds turned Sir William Napier. Yet on the whole the supposition that an Apostle can have been the literary craftsman here concerned seems hard.

Whether he could or not, it seems to me extremely unlikely that he would have wished to handle his subject in this way. For one who had never seen Jesus (or perhaps had barely seen Him in childhood) to try to make the meaning of His story real to his own imagination by a carefully designed succession of dramatic scenes would be natural and fitting. But would it have been natural or fitting that one who had gone with Jesus in His daily walks, who had lain leaning against Him at that last supper, and had received from the Cross His dying behest, should have adopted any proceeding of the kind? Or would it have been altogether too cold-blooded a fashion of treating what was dearest in his memory to be psychologically possible in a loyal and loving man? It may be said that in all probability it was this same disciple who, in the Revelation, had visions of his Master in glory with His voice "as the voice of many waters" and "his countenance as the sun shineth in his strength"; and it may be asked whether it would have been less natural for a disciple to handle our Lord's earthly life as a dramatic artist than to have these visions. I think it

right to put this question, but my own unhesitating answer is that it would have been far less natural.

I must now recall another observation already made. Parts of this Gospel have been felt, by some readers whose opinions have weight, to have the simultaneous effect of reality in a detail here and there and unreality in the setting, circumstances, and general character of the scene. If this is a sound observation, it of course suggests narrative at second hand. Passionate bias or a brooding habit of mind may no doubt play strange tricks with people's recollection of events in which they have taken part, but as a rule a man of strong mind and character has a pretty just memory of the upshot and main significance of transactions which he has known. With the retailer of a story at second hand it is notoriously otherwise; anyone who has once related an interesting experience of his own is apt to find later on that some pungent remark or picturesque detail which was included in his original narrative has remained graven in the memory of a friend who misconceived the substance of the narrative to a remarkable extent.

Now there are important scenes in this Gospel which, I believe, show that the very essence of the transaction had been apprehended by the writer; and, since I do not intend to fasten attention on points in the book which I think of secondary importance, I shall not discuss closely how far other scenes display the common characteristic of secondhand narration. Yet I do suspect that some of them may have been reconstructed by a writer who did not understand the situation, upon the basis of truly reported and well remembered sayings of our Lord's, together with other true touches of such minor detail as lingers long in memory. And there is one general characteristic of the scenes that fill a large part of Chapters v

to xii of the Gospel which must be remarked. Every careful reader feels that there is a discrepancy between the manner in which our Lord in this Gospel unfolds His full claim (and that angrily) to the Jews, and the gradual and gentle manner in which in the other Gospels He leads His disciples on to understand what He is. The extent of the discrepancy is apt to be exaggerated, as I shall point out later; but a real discrepancy remains.

Now assuming for the moment that what I have just said can be made good later, it will be for the reader to consider whether the explanation of it does not lie in the natural point of view of a writer in a later generation, who himself had learned of Jesus from the first as in full reality the Son of God, for whom the mass of his Jewish compatriots were the people who had finally and wickedly rejected Jesus, and to whom the splendid actuality of our Lord's dealing with the religion in which he was born could not appeal as it appeals to us in our calmer historical retrospect. It is possible to argue that no explanation is needed, and that we see here the passionate emotion of a disciple who had apprehended his Master's full purport more quickly and more deeply than most, who was of stern and fiery, originally even of savage, temper, and who to the end of his days felt as bitterly about his Master's death as, say, Plato felt when he wrote the *Gorgias*. I can hardly doubt that the temperament of St. John himself did contribute to the character of this Gospel in this regard, but I doubt whether that character can be completely explained in this way. In view of the impression which some dialogues in this Gospel create on many readers, it may be asked: was the disciple whom Jesus loved so oblivious of features in our Lord's dealings with men which have left so clear an impress on other

pages of the New Testament; and had he "so learned Christ"?

I pass now to a matter which is slighter in itself, but which, corroborated as it is by the indications which I have noticed, seems to me very strong evidence upon this question of authorship. I speak of the famous mannerism by which the writer refers to St. John himself not by name but as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." It is needless to insist again that St. John is the person meant, and that the way in which this disciple is brought in is meant to put him forward as the chief witness for what is related. No doubt from a very early time till almost the present day most readers, however acute, have assumed without difficulty that the person thus speaking of St. John is himself. But then, throughout all that long period, reverence for sacred writing has exercised — harmlessly enough in the case of the New Testament — a peculiar spell, such that we can often pass over what would otherwise seem strange or repugnant, with a comfortable sense that it is all right because it is in the Bible. The fact remains that the third person is normally used to denote someone other than the person who is speaking; and whenever we are sure that it is not so, we ought to have some good reason to give for this abnormal use. Could there be any such reason here? The phrase in question may perhaps seem strange in any case. That another writer should refer repeatedly to St. John with the obvious intention that the reference should be understood, and yet should never straightforwardly name him, may be fairly called, as I have called it, a piece of mannerism, but a mannerism which has a certain literary effect, which would not be surprising in a book so full (in a good sense) of artifice, and which would have nothing whatsoever disagreeable in it. And it would not be carrying

conjecture far to suggest how the phrase came to be used. It is much more likely than not that St. John in his reminiscences tried to avoid talking about himself; it is much more likely than not that his hearers discovered, nevertheless, how near he had been to our Lord. This being so, he may easily have come to be spoken of often by the endearing phrase here applied to him. In any case, many thousands in every century since the book was written must have thought by preference of St. John under the appellation which this writer gives to him, and the supposition that in one way or another the writer himself had come to think of St. John in the same way is one which needs no more precise explanation.

But from what kind of motive which we can decently attribute to him could St. John have invented this way of referring to himself? The current explanation, that he did so in modest self-concealment, breaks down as soon as we really consider it. In the first place, if he had written to give to the world his uniquely valuable testimony, it would have been no vanity but a matter of plain duty to give to what he wrote the weight which nothing but his actual attestation could give it. In the second place, anonymity in this merely literal sense did not conceal him in the least, and could never have been expected or intended to conceal him from those who were to receive his book and accept its authority. Thus one is inclined to say that this way of speaking of himself would have been nothing but an affectation, a piece of smug self-complacency which would be unpleasant in anyone, and which in this instance it is impossible to suppose.

I have in some points stated this case strongly, because it is a fact that these points strike many readers, as they have struck me, very forcibly. Yet I come to a conclusion on this matter with more hesitation than on any

other important matter discussed in this essay. I may say at once that nothing of consequence in my further argument really depends on this point. But in treating this Gospel as an historical document we had better reflect that we are not certain of possessing in it the direct testimony of St. John, and must consider fairly what follows if we do not. Later on the reader may perhaps feel that this great Christian writer and the beloved disciple who inspired him stand out as more intelligible figures and nobler figures when we recognize them as two different men. Critics who are disposed to follow this question further may recall that facts which now seem obvious about the First and Third Gospels were till quite lately almost unnoticed. This resulted from the dazzling effect of the great figure which is apparent on almost every page of those Gospels. In the greatest chapters of this Gospel that figure is, if possible, more clearly apparent, and attention is apt to be diverted from its comparative remoteness in other passages. This, put briefly, seems to me to constitute the chief problem, from the point of view of mere criticism, which remains — for pupils of level judgment — unsolved about this Gospel. Incidentally this arresting effect of the most salient features of the different Gospels may set us thinking of the force of that personality to which ultimately they all owed their inspiration, and on the complete assurance with which, in the vital respects, we can trace that personality in them all.

It is only fair, however, to mention one difficulty which the scholar whose view I have so far adopted regarded seriously. It arises out of the language of Chapter i, 14, which it is thought may be taken as implying that the writer was an eyewitness. The other passages in the Gospel which have been similarly understood have already

been mentioned. If we set aside, as we must, the words in xxi, 24, inserted into an appendix to the Gospel by one who presents himself as having written neither the appendix nor the Gospel, the rest very clearly claim that the writer possesses first-hand information; but hardly less clearly they seem to distinguish him from the eyewitness who informed him. There remains this verse, where in the middle of the sentence, "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us . . . full of grace and truth," he throws in the exclamation, "and we beheld His glory, . . . as of the only begotten of the Father." He certainly does not here distinguish in thought between himself and the eyewitnesses of our Lord's mission, and we might suppose that he is classing himself among them unless we observed, what is not at first obvious, that he makes no distinction between those eyewitnesses and ourselves.

The real sense of this whole passage, which is admirably brought out by Dr. Westcott's commentary, may at first be obscured when we compare it with the well-known opening words of the First Epistle and the words, later in that Epistle, "and we have beheld and bear witness that the Father hath sent the Son to be the saviour of the world." With a vigorous use of metaphor to which a parallel may be found in Plato, this Gospel applies to the perception of something by no means visible in the proper sense, the very word that was specially appropriate to spectators at a play, and from which "theatre" is derived. The idea, in itself worth noticing, which underlies the interjection in this verse is more deliberately and emphatically used in the Epistle in a sentence which, though with some of the confusion of spontaneous eloquence, classes the writer among those who had seen and whose hands had "handled" Jesus. That this is the plain

significance of that passage I cannot doubt; it is a natural suggestion that when the Epistle says "we have seen" and the Gospel in a parallel passage "we beheld," the word "we" in each case denotes the same group or class of persons. But this suggestion is refuted by a nearer consideration of the context. In reading the Epistle it is manifest that the stress laid on the writer's qualification to bear witness, and the implied distinction between "us" who "declare" what we beheld and "you" to whom "we declare" it, form a vital element in the whole purport of the book. But when we turn back to this passage in the prologue to the Gospel we find ourselves at a point in a studied and stately recital at which personal reference to the writer would be irrelevant and discordant, and as yet any allusion to the little company of original disciples — two of whom, purposely left obscure, are to make an appearance on the scene in due order — would be even more so.

The real reference of the word "we" in this verse has been given already in the words, "those which believe on his name," of whom it has already been said with emphasis that they receive a gift and a power certainly not meant to be limited to the first disciples. It is unmistakably implied in the words which this astonishingly pregnant writer uses of them, that these (the whole multitude of those, then, thereafter, and forever, who believe) formed, from the time when the Word came to "his own" and by "his own" as a people was rejected, a new community, as it were a new nation, "born not of blood," but with a continuous life of its own like that of the old Israel. The purpose for which the Word became flesh was accomplished, once for all, while He "dwelt among us . . . full of grace and truth"; that which in those few years He revealed may be said to have been,

then and once for all, beheld by the fellowship continuing from that date to the end of time of those who received Him. This and nothing else is really involved in the phrase "we beheld" in the Gospel, and there is nothing strange in this use of language. If an Englishman were to say, "We got rid of autocratic monarchy in the seventeenth century," or, "We bore the brunt of the Napoleonic wars," it would not surprise us. He would only be using slightly rhetorical language, which might or might not be entirely suited to the occasion. In this instance a strictly parallel phrase is entirely suited to the occasion. Thus, upon the assumption that the writer is not St. John, he is free from any trace of an attempt to pass for what he was not.

Four other books of the New Testament, two of them important, are ascribed by tradition to St. John. It would not, I think, contribute much toward the purpose of this study if I were to touch upon the intensely difficult question of the Revelation; and the conjectures which I cannot myself avoid making in regard to it are based, as I am fully conscious, upon very insufficient knowledge. But as to a book which in this connection, as in others, is of far higher importance, the First Epistle of St. John, I cannot refrain from stating the opinion which I have formed. I confess to the conviction that it was actually written by St. John. My reasons for here parting company with those whose opinion I have so far followed may seem inadequate, but they can be put rather shortly, and will at least illustrate what I have endeavored to point out about the Gospel. I have enlarged enough upon certain features which strongly impress me in the Gospel, and which make it impossible for me to think of it as by the Apostle himself. I am no less strongly impressed by

the consideration that these features are quite absent from the Epistle.

The beauty of this Epistle has a unique quality which lends itself ill to an analytical criticism. But it should be easy to evoke the reader's own judgment on this subject by a few challenging remarks. There can, of course, be no question here, as there is in the case of the Gospel, of whether the facts of our Lord's ministry have been misconceived by the writer, for the Epistle says nothing about the earthly life of Jesus beyond its emphatic reminder that He did live. But as to the other points which, rightly or wrongly, I have alleged against the view that St. John wrote the Gospel, I allege the exact contrary of each of them in regard to the Epistle. No words in the Gospel can rightly be read as claiming that the writer was an eyewitness of our Lord's ministry. It is far otherwise with the Epistle. Its vigorous opening words do undoubtedly suggest, when first read, that the writer was himself an eyewitness, whichever of several possible views we may take as to why he uses the plural "we"; and it is not conceivable that the man who used these words was unaware of the suggestion which they conveyed. The Gospel is written with elaborate art and method. It is impossible to conceive a book with any character or power more wholly artless than the Epistle, in the strict and full sense of the word "artless," which implies no sort of depreciation. The validity of this observation can be tested by anyone who will try to make a useful analysis of its structure and argument. He will soon confess his failure, and he will see that it is due not — as might happen to him with the Gospel — to the complexity of the author's method, but to that author's having written without conscious method at all, as the stored-up treasure of his heart came forth. In view of its peculiar composition,

I have argued that the Gospel cannot easily be attributed to a man who, whatever his power of thought, belonged originally to the simple rather than to the learned sort and lived as an Apostle is likely to have lived. No book could more easily be ascribed to such a man than the Epistle. I have argued that the Gospel could hardly have been written by a really old man. No other book that I have seen recalls so vividly as does the Epistle characteristics which many of us have witnessed in a noble old age.

Thus, while I find it hard now to read the Gospel with the belief that it was written by St. John, I find it impossible to read the Epistle with the belief that it was written by a follower or by an imitator.

I here find myself confronted by the opinion prevalent among scholars, whether they think that St. John wrote these books or not: that both books are by the same hand. This opinion has been fortified by very careful and candid comparisons in detail of the language used in the two. The argument based on this rightly lays stress not on those striking and highly significant phrases which the two books have in common, yet which might obviously be the common property of a school, but on the ordinary and insignificant words and grammatical constructions for which both books show a preference. I submit that, when applied to some books of the New Testament, this argument is quite without the force which in other cases it might easily have. The so-called Johannine books of the New Testament,— including, though my argument does not depend on this, the Revelation,— unless they were all written by one man, point all but certainly to the influence and authority exercised by one early Christian teacher, with a distinct mind of his own, over younger minds themselves not

lacking in original force. That teacher must all but certainly have been a man who used the help of a secretary and translator when he addressed himself in writing to Greek-speaking people. It is, further, much more likely than not that the man chosen in this way to serve a great teacher would later on endeavor for himself to set forth the same teaching more fully, and to preserve in writing the memory of much which the teacher had only delivered in spoken form. He would have become far too much steeped in the manner of speech in which he had once interpreted his chief, or helped that chief to express himself, to find it easy afterwards to write differently, even if the mannerisms which he had learned in such a way did not become so consecrated for him that he wittingly and gladly clung to them.

Reference should perhaps be made here to the controversy as to whether the Gospel or the Epistle is the earlier book, in which, of course, it has generally been assumed that both must be by the same hand. On a careful comparison of the leading ideas in the two, some scholars have looked upon the Epistle as a forecast of a larger work to follow, for they point out that the ideas of the Epistle are developed, amplified, and added to in the Gospel; and I am a little tempted to say that in the Gospel the hand of the theologian, with his rather delusive definiteness, has been laid upon the missionary convictions of the Epistle. If St. John actually wrote the Gospel, this view would be incompatible with the conviction, made irresistible by many sentences in the Epistle, that it was written by a very aged man. Upon the view which I have suggested, this difficulty disappears. Other scholars have argued from the same data that the Epistle was written to recall and insist upon doctrine which the writer had already set forth more fully. "It is the aftermath,

not the first-fruits of the writer's message to the Church," says one good commentator upon it; and this sentence seems to me most just. Only it must not be assumed that the writer's message to the Church had previously been delivered to those for whom the Epistle was intended, in the form of a great writing such as this Gospel. Most Christians then, and the recipients of most of the New Testament, had received their instruction in the Gospel chiefly through oral teaching; and this writer would not have waited for years to deliver his message to the Church while he worked it up into the finished literary form of the Fourth Gospel. Upon the whole, the view which I have adopted seems to solve a difficulty about the relation between these two books.

But, in any case, reasons of a sure and massive sort should deter us from attributing this Epistle to any mere follower of a great teacher.

Let me finally illustrate their character by a single phrase which must be admitted to accord entirely with the whole tone of this letter. It is the recurrent phrase, "little children." In the concluding sentence of the Epistle, which a pathetic anxiety for his flock makes the writer put in the place of any proper peroration, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols," it is obviously not infants who are being specially cautioned against this particular danger. To later generations this manner of addressing a community of all ages has seemed simply touching and entirely natural, on the supposition that the writer is St. John. To the "fathers" and to the "strong young men," whom the Epistle does address, it must have appealed in the same way, upon the same supposition. But it was a preposterous phrase if the man who used it was not both a very old man and a man who addressed this particular flock with recognized and great authority. If it

is assumed that the writer was not really this, but was writing imaginatively in that character, then, looking at the whole Epistle, we must indeed pronounce that he carried through a difficult literary venture most surpassingly well.

To return to larger aspects of the question: This Epistle is not to be overlooked, not to be disparaged — as some commentators implicitly disparage it — because it is not a Gospel, not to be treated as a mere appendage to what is doubtless an even more important book, much less as a faint and dispirited echo of it. Whether for the purpose of reconstructing our views of the past or for a far more useful purpose, it is a book with an independent and very great value of its own, containing, as we may recall, in three words nearly the most famous and quite the most astonishing saying of the whole Bible, and showing in almost every part of it the arresting and incisive power of that saying. I should like to put very seriously to other students the problem which the Epistle thus raises. The intense effect which it is calculated to produce upon a reader is, of course, a matter of fact, just as much as the tendency of a certain kind of music to make certain kinds of people dance is a matter of fact, though there are people who do not dance to it. Probably a good many of us have missed the effect of this book; we have recollections of it drawn from our childhood, and the familiar words, "God is love," have connections with being put to bed. But like many other things which people are given to reading to children, this book is remote from a child's understanding; and what I speak of is its strangely different effect upon a reader who turns to it in mature or maturing life with an open and a fresh mind. I will not try to describe that effect beyond remarking that, if it is really felt at all, it is felt as a thing potently affecting

the main motives of action and potently enhancing them.

That the force with which this Epistle hits proceeds from the writer's own state of mind is evident. Can we understand and enter into his state of mind, as one often and easily can enter into states of mind which one does not oneself share or (it may be) propose to share? What is the writer's own account of how he arrived at this mental attitude, and is it a truthful account? Was his condition of mind — in which, as the driest attempt to analyze his words would show, the ordinary dividing lines between remembered fact, doctrines, and active desire are strangely absent — something vamped up? Probably almost all critics would recoil at first from the epithet which I have used, but I use it as the best description of an alternative which naturally presents itself and ought to be coolly faced. If not, just what was it, and how did the writer get there? I have all possible respect for the critical attempt to explain the origins of Christianity thoroughly, but it seems to me that the serious work of criticism has hardly begun till the critic has again and again in his own mind pondered over many questions like these. That he need be easily able to record his results well in writing does not follow.

For the much narrower purpose of my present inquiry the prime importance of the Epistle is this: Whether the same man wrote it and the Gospel or not, and whether the Epistle be forecast, preface, postscript, or reminder of the Gospel, in one respect its relation to the Gospel is certain. It shows us the things, in the teaching represented by both books, which to teacher and taught alike were of the greatest importance, altogether absorbing importance. It is the gist of what the teacher from whom in some manner the Gospel is derived — John, for the

speculation to the contrary is nebulous — did most certainly teach, and taught with that iteration and that concentrated insistence which are characteristic of the Epistle.

VIII

GENERAL CHARACTER OF THIS GOSPEL AS HISTORY

I WISH in the present chapter to consider rather more closely the character of this Gospel as an historical document and to touch upon the points in which it does contribute to our knowledge of the sequence of events in the life of our Lord.[1] But our real interest in this history is, above all, to understand what we can of our Lord's personality as manifested in His life, and to grasp, if we can, the chief things that He actually taught. Questions about minor incidents — about how much He may have confined His mission to Galilee, and so forth — may arouse our curiosity, but are secondary matters. And since those for whom the Gospel was first written cared quite as much as we for the greater matters and cared far less than we about accuracy in minor biographical details, it may well be that this book will tell us about what is most important more certainly than it will tell anything else.

We have seen that this Gospel cannot be taken, at least with any certainty, to come from St. John's own hand. Assuming that it did not, this implies that the writer may sometimes have mistaken St. John's meaning

[1] If this chapter overlaps Chapter VI unduly, the reason is that Chapter VI is the first of this book that I wrote, whereas this is almost the last, written intentionally without reference to Chapter VI, in order to avoid bias for my own previously expressed first impressions.

or forgotten what he really said; it implies also that, though he derived much of his material from St. John, we do not know exactly how much of it; and since when he wrote, and still more in his earlier days, hearsay about our Lord, true and false and derived through many channels, abounded, it implies that, more likely than not, he combined with what St. John told him other material of doubtful authority. We have observed, too, that the book has a more marked doctrinal intention than the other Gospels, and therewith that it possesses a highly poetic quality and takes a form very unlike that of ordinary history. This implies that we cannot guess how far the writer might go in working up whole scenes out of slight recorded incidents or sayings; in choosing the most impressive things that tradition told him rather than the most authentic; even possibly, though I very much doubt this, in inventing incidents which he believed to be of a kind that might have happened, and felt to be illustrative of an important truth. These two considerations, taken together, may seem very baffling. I believe, indeed, that because of them, the historical truth to be found in this Gospel is surrounded with a fringe of doubtful matter from which, it may well be, the progress of discussion among scholars and divines will never quite remove the obscurity. But it would be foolish to conclude from this that the historian can here find no firm ground at all to go upon. There are points in which the Evangelist's strictly historical intention is unmistakable; and he writes with actual reference to an historical work known to his readers.

The book is not exactly analogous to a simple history or to an historical drama. It is absolutely unique in its character because its occasion, subject, and purpose were unique. We begin to find a clue to the writer's

method when we note clearly what his main purpose was. It was evidently to set forth Jesus of Nazareth in His true relation to God and man, in the respects in which existing books failed sufficiently to exhibit the truth and prevalent belief might fail to grasp it.

It is correct enough to call this a doctrinal purpose, but it is a mere fallacy to infer that it has nothing to do with history, — a fallacy into which philosophical writers of the last generation sometimes fell, — for the essence of the doctrine lies in the significance of an historical fact. We might say that in his First Epistle St. John expressed beliefs toward which metaphysical inquiry conducted some of the greatest philosophers; certainly that it put concisely the sum of all possible ethics. But it was along no path of speculative inquiry that he arrived at his conclusions, and along no such path that he intended to lead his "little children." The whole result, as he claims, was "beheld" by him in an individual whom he beheld and loved. And the whole intention of the Gospel corresponds with this. "The Word was God." "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." The Evangelist may or may not have intentionally used the term "the Word" to contrast his doctrine with that of Philo, whose "Word" was not God and was not made flesh and remained ever the thinnest of abstractions. But the force of these phrases is felt throughout the Gospel. The very gist of its amazing doctrine is that the fullness of the Godhead was made manifest in a flesh-and-blood individual living on earth at a particular time among a particular people. A doctrinal interest like this might have distorted his view of the historical facts, but it certainly must have given the writer an unusually deep interest in them.

There is a secondary fact of history less interesting to

us, which to him is of great importance. The Jews rejected this revelation of God. Slight as is our knowledge of the precise story of Judaistic Christianity, it is at least certain how strong was the tendency among good and gentle people to try to mould their lives on Christian teaching, which after all is, in a sense, ethical first and foremost, while departing as little as possible from full loyalty to that old Israel to which they had so many ties of piety and which still strove fiercely to maintain its highly separate national life. Such an attempt appeals to the sympathy of people to-day, especially — as many perhaps like to think — to that of all who are heirs to English traditions. But though it had its amiable side, it was fatal to the creation of a new and world-wide community which was to have its one bond of union in Jesus Christ; and in any alliance of Christian with political Jewish sentiment it was the more mundane and more violent of the two forces that would prevail. For the Evangelist, as we can see in that crisis of his narrative which occurs in Chapter xii of the Gospel, the whole meaning and justification of Jewish patriotism had passed on to the new community into which all nations were to be drawn, when as a nation the Jews rejected our Lord. The historic fact of this deliberate, decisive, and cruel rejection, a generation before he wrote, is thus to him a subject of living interest.

Least of all can we overlook the reality of his historical interest in our Lord's intercourse with the handful who bore Him company on earth. The writer of the Epistle, when he talks of love, is not giving the results of ethical speculation; the bond of real love, upon which he insists, originates indeed in God's own love and is to embrace all men that will believe in Christ's name; but the writer's mind is on fire with the thought of the actual manifes-

tation of God's love upon earth in Jesus Christ, and the wide community, throughout which that love is to be received and responded to, proceeds entirely from the real and whole-heartedly human affection that bound together the first disciples and One whom their hands could handle. The Evangelist's relation to the writer of the Epistle would indeed be remote if we did not find throughout the Gospel, even if mingled with a more abstract doctrinal interest, signs of an entirely personal interest in that little fellowship, in the individuals who composed it, and in its living Head.

I come now to the two influences which, I feel sure, do most to make his handling of the history in which he is thus interested perplexing to his interpreters now. We might think, as I have already suggested, that the Evangelist would write an historical drama on the theme just indicated, or a history developing that theme with something more of the dramatic spirit than is present in all natural story-telling and in all except the worst histories. Whichever form of this simple idea we adopted we should find it misleading, because, for all his art, he is not writing in accordance with any existing pattern, but writing for a particular purpose under particular circumstances. Now, in the first place, he is a preacher and a pastor, concerned with men's lives; he is not contented with the abstract proposition of divinity that Jesus is the Son of God, or with the historic fact that, as he believes, Jesus was abundantly manifested as such; that idea is to come to his readers with some illuminating power or dynamic force; and this is all the more necessary since he is leaving unnoticed all that wealth of direct and practical precept in which the teaching of Jesus abounded. Therefore he recurs insistently, as has been noticed in a previous chapter, not to the bare idea of our Lord's Divinity, but

to such ideas as a Life to live, a Light to walk by, an energy of God working from the beginning, working in Jesus Christ, and to work in us. His intention to do this might well override his interest in the chronology of our Lord's life.

But in the second place, he is not writing for people who knew little about our Lord; nor presumably is he writing, as St. Luke seems to have done, in order to supersede earlier books through which they knew about Him. I shall recur later to the startling way in which he ignores all that we should, without him, think most characteristic of our Lord's teaching, and for the moment refer only to the narration of His life. There were certain things on which this author felt it necessary to dwell fully, and sometimes for the sake of enforcing them, sometimes through the play of his own human interest in the events, he was led to correct or amplify or set in a new light what had already been well told about our Lord. But there was no occasion for him to tell again all the chief things that had been told about our Lord before, necessary though it would have been to do so in writing a new history book or in constructing a drama. Anyone can easily notice allusions in this Gospel, such as can only be explained in this way, to what the reader is supposed to know already. "For John was not yet cast into prison"; specially interested as the writer is in the Baptist, he says no more about his imprisonment. Again, "the twelve" suddenly appear, but he never tells us who they were. On general grounds it would be overwhelmingly probable that the writer of the Fourth Gospel was acquainted with some earlier written account of our Lord's life. As a matter of fact, he clearly had St. Mark's Gospel before him. There is no real sign of his having either of the two others before him; this

might be because he did not know them, which would tend to prove his early date, or because he regarded St. Mark as especially authoritative.[1] I may here then take it as unquestionable. The fact, so easily overlooked but so simple when once noticed, that this Gospel is written, so to speak, on the top of St. Mark, is the key to many difficulties. We may recall here that many ancient writers were in a position similar to that of a man making a speech with his eye on the clock; they aimed at writing what would about fill a roll of a given size, and they did so with hardly any of our conveniences; they expanded here and condensed or omitted there just as a speaker does. Again, we may recall that one is naturally reluctant to tell again what has been told already in a way which one cannot better. Thus, though a writer's choice at each moment of what he will tell or treat as known already is likely to be rather wayward, we need never be surprised at this Evangelist's omitting anything which can be found in St. Mark, and we can never infer from his omitting it that he was ignorant of it or disbelieved it or thought it unimportant. And this relation of the two books has a further consequence. When important features of the narrative in this Gospel appear to conflict with what we should have gathered from St. Mark, it is almost impossible to suppose that this Evangelist wrote at random and without information which seemed to justify him. To make that supposition reasonable we should have to show not merely that the writer had a doctrinal purpose to serve, but that he could not have served it so well without thus taking the risk of discrediting himself.

We must then take these two books together so far as

[1] Students should not take this point for granted; they will find the evidence plainly set out in the last chapter of Dr. Stanton's book.

their subject matter overlaps. It would be absurd, a thing which no reasonable man does in other matters than New Testament criticism, to assume that, if they seem to conflict, one has to be right throughout and the other wrong throughout. Also, when a capable writer somewhat later, with apparently some fresh sources of information, concerns himself to amplify and correct an earlier writer, it is likely that his information generally justified him in doing so — likely also that he is liable to some errors of his own. These, of course, are only presumptions; but at the outset we had best bear them in mind.

Yet I think it is within rather strict limits that we should try to make a clear and connected story out of the two, because each was probably indifferent to the sort of detailed chronological biography for which our inquisitiveness looks. We may observe a startling instance of such indifference in another New Testament writer, St. Luke. He bestows some pains on dates which have a real historical significance; but in finishing his Gospel, which is the longest book in the New Testament, he was possibly pressed for space after inserting at length a most interesting incident, and leaves us with the impression that certain events occupied less than forty-eight hours. Later he begins the story of the Acts by telling us that those events lasted over forty days; for the chronological fact has there some bearing on what is to follow. St. Mark, similarly, must often mean very little when he says "after these things" or "the next day." Of course there is a broad sequence of events to which he is keenly alive; some things belonged to the opening days of our Lord's mission and are narrated with a rush and a swing; after an intermediate period, told of with some signs of confusion, there comes a strongly marked crisis in our Lord's dealing with His disciples; and from that point

events flow on rapidly but solemnly to the great conclusion. But beyond this we can hardly think that St. Mark would trouble to get minor events into their right order and to mark the intervals between them. He had to set down the things which he related in a way which would carry a reader along, and would instinctively avoid the repulsive form of a mere collection of anecdotes; but we must not imagine that he would do this in a way which would really have been pedantic.

Even if he had cared more for the exactitude which we might wish from him, the information he wanted would probably have failed him. Any man to-day who has much to interest him would often find it impossible to say offhand whether a somewhat memorable journey of his took place two years or three years ago, or whether he had visited (say) Rome, four, five, or six times in his life; his talk of that journey might leave his friends under some mistake as to when it happened, and he might speak often of Rome without its appearing whether he had been there more than once or whether he went there regularly once a year. This illustrates the sort of data which St. Mark probably had to use in regard to matters of secondary importance, which matters of the very highest importance threw into the shade.

When the Fourth Evangelist wrote to say just such things as St. Mark had not said, and incidentally therefore to correct him, he must have thought first of saying his own say well; we can hardly think that he was nearer to the point of view of a modern writer of a "Life" than St. Mark had been — indeed, in some respects he was evidently further from it. There are obvious points in which he challenges the question whether he is right when St. Mark seems to say otherwise; but we need not think of him as bound to show us just how the things

he tells dovetail into another man's narrative; nor, even if at some points he seems more accurate than St. Mark, are we sure that his information — or if he was St. John himself, his memory — would have enabled him thus to gratify us.

Two valuable books on this subject have appeared of late years, the inspiring fragment (unhappily left a fragment) of Dr. Scott Holland's work, *The Fourth Gospel*, and Canon Richmond's *The Gospel of the Rejection*. Both are illuminating, but I rather wonder whether the bold conjecture with which both would make one complete narrative out of two incomplete ones adds to their value. In any case it is my object here to say things which I cannot doubt. For the reason just given I do doubt how far the two Gospels before us can be neatly pieced together. We cannot quite measure how far the Fourth Evangelist may not have been ready to go beyond his historical data in pointing his broad historical truth; but this need not keep us from attending to him when he evidently means to correct an earlier historical view.

As to the external course of events, the test of the historical worth of the Fourth Gospel is whether we believe that our Lord went more than once to Jerusalem after His mission began. Now His mission plainly lasted longer than the minimum period into which some people's imaginations have compressed the transactions actually recorded by St. Mark. He acted by human speech upon human minds, and all our knowledge of human affairs bids us say that the impression on human minds which resulted later in the Sermon on the Mount and in the Epistles was effected not in some months but in some years — not necessarily many. Then in that space, amounting to (say) two to three years, did our Lord, who is represented as much afoot, never traverse the

sixty to one hundred miles which may have separated His Galilean resort for the moment from Jerusalem? We do not exactly know with what practical qualifications He observed the very impressive law about the three feasts at Jerusalem while, according to an authority other than St. Mark or St. John, He condemned the teaching of any departure from the law "till the time be fulfilled"; but it is vastly improbable that He was more lax than other people about it.

Again, we must not speculate too confidently as to how He would deliver his message; but on no possible view of Him or of His message can we easily conceive of Him as hesitating to deliver it to the leaders of His own Jewish religion at the supremely important centre of that religion. Again, if the crowd in Jerusalem had known Him previously only by hearsay, the reception given Him upon the visit there, of which St. Mark tells us, would be somewhat unaccountable; so too would it be that, after His death, multitudes there received so gladly from Galilean strangers the report of His resurrection and accepted His teaching through them. But above all we have to account for speeches of His which are reported evidently without guile, by other authorities than the Fourth Evangelist, for example, "Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often—." This saying does not stand alone; in other sayings and parables, one of them given by St. Mark, the rest coming to us from another source, not invented for this purpose, He speaks of the Jews rejecting Him, as He could never have done if till those last few days before His Passion He had limited Himself to teaching up-country people in Galilee and never given Jerusalem a real chance either to accept or to reject.

On the whole, it is not a reasonable supposition that He had never come up to a feast and never taught in

Jerusalem before that last occasion. It does not follow that the Fourth Evangelist, who tells us of these previous visits there, had exact information as to just how often they occurred, and what happened on each occasion, or that he cared much about detailed accuracy in that respect.

At this point we may wonder how St. Mark could have left out what seems to us so important a fact in our Lord's biography. I believe that our difficulty in this respect arises only from a false idea of the character of his book. We expect, quite without reason, that this, our primary source for our Lord's life, shall have been written with the same sort of aim with which articles are composed for the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Biography in that sense was not demanded. The Second Gospel, it is true, is much more like a piece of plain historical narrative than is the Fourth; yet that Evangelist also is a preacher who wishes to tell, however truly, not all the facts which might be demanded for a cyclopædia, but facts enough to show what to him seem the chief aspects of our Lord's life. He too tells his story with a method and a force which have been very much underrated, chiefly perhaps because we seldom take a Gospel and read it straight through. And he has to develop his main theme in a book which is intended to be short, using for that purpose, though with some exceptions, a compression which is extraordinary though most effective. Now if we read St. Mark quickly through, we are led with startling rapidity into the midst of scenes in which our Lord is pursuing, in the countryside best known to Him, a mission not of controversy but of teaching and of compassion, with a chosen band of followers who are learning to understand Him. Suddenly the time comes when they see Him clearly as the Messiah, but are forbidden to

proclaim Him as such. Almost from that moment begin the stages of His progress toward the Cross, a progress marked by a succession of scenes in which they are being taught the bewildering lesson of what the Messiahship really means. The effect of this upon us is, of course, intended.

I shall have to ask in the next chapter whether St. John's teaching compels us to think St. Mark's view of our Lord's life substantially untrue in any respect. The point to be noticed here is that St. Mark could not, within the narrow compass of his book, have told his story with anything like the same effect if he had complicated his task by introducing a number of journeys to Jerusalem, with the controversies to which they led. Possibly he knew very little about them, and his simplification of the story was made easier by St. Peter's having chiefly dwelt — as well he might — upon scenes in Galilee, up to the moment when his own great confession was made. In any case nothing follows from his omissions. Look at the book. Any argument based upon what it does not say is absurd. I have already pointed out that it is also a mistake to argue from mere omissions in the Fourth Gospel.

Each of the several instances in which it is independently likely that the writer of the Fourth Gospel does correct the historical view derived from St. Mark adds to the general likelihood of his being well informed in most of them. I only wish to touch lightly upon a few more of the points in which careful scholars feel that this Gospel gives us a clearer historical view. St. Mark's account of the sudden call which the first four Apostles obeyed is dramatically impressive, but were they quite so unprepared for that call as he leaves us to think? St. Luke seems to have felt a difficulty about this and found

a way of answering it. This Gospel gives a more natural explanation: that these men had been followers of John the Baptist and began to know our Lord when with him. It accords with this that a Gospel coming from a pupil of one of these men, if not from himself, should show a special interest in the Baptist.

Rather tiresome attempts have been made to magnify the slight discrepancies here between St. Mark and the later Evangelist. These are well within the ordinary limits of divergence between any two genuine accounts given long afterward of the same transaction. Very likely the later writer wanted to make as emphatic as possible what he had heard — doubtless not with verbal exactitude — about the testimony of John the Baptist. St. Mark, however, has already in two verses made this tribute of that forerunner to Him who was to come as high as possible, before he brings Jesus upon the scene. Having done so, he hastens to transfer his whole interest to our Lord alone, though the figure of the Baptist still possesses him enough for him to interrupt his course in a later chapter with the story of the Baptist's death. There have been speculations, too, as to controversial purposes which the Fourth Evangelist has to serve in the passages about the Baptist; but one cannot suppose that he is lying when he claims, as he really does, to have knowledge about the Baptist, derived through Apostles who have been his followers. Much the most natural view of this part of the Gospel is that the writer expresses an affectionate interest taken long afterward in the memory of the Baptist; for he is the person whose figure gains added regard from these chapters. The curiously excited phrase, "He confessed, and denied not, but confessed, I am not the Christ," seems, as Dr. Holland remarked, to reflect the surprise of the disciples who

heard him. The moving words, "He must increase but I must decrease," have the ring of nature, not of art, and their whole context has the air of coming from someone keenly interested in the Baptist.

As the two Gospels proceed, their subjects become for a while largely irrelevant to each other. One is concerned with that side of our Lord's mission which must have contributed most to the teaching and the training of His chief disciples, the other with the growth all the while of antagonism to Him among great people in Jerusalem. Some such development of the conflict surely took place, for the ultimate combination of the Pharisees with the Sadducees to destroy our Lord was a thing which needed much to bring it about. The Evangelist has a reasonable account to give — in Chapter xi — of the final agreement of these parties, and later on of the kind of pressure which they were able to put upon Pilate. Meanwhile, it seems that our Lord had put a strain on the allegiance of many in Galilee who had at first heard Him gladly, and the description given by this Gospel — Chapter vi — of the fluctuation and falling away among the crowds who followed Him helps us much to understand the course of His career. None of these things, so credible in themselves, are such as the author, whatever his doctrinal tendency, is likely to have related for any reason except that he happened to know them.

Now there are definite features of our Lord's disputations in Jerusalem in which many people feel that this Gospel must be mistaken; and while the occasions of some of these dialogues might well be long remembered, it would be likely that disciples from Galilee present at them would be somewhat excited and troubled hearers of what passed, not a little bewildered themselves by what

our Lord said in challenge to the leaders of the Jews. Some few specially striking sayings might indeed sink deep into the memory of a gifted young man devoted to Him, but we can hardly suppose that the general course of each of these discussions could be reported after an interval with that fidelity to which so much of our Lord's simple teaching lent itself, or would have been kept alive in memory by repeated instruction to the faithful after He had gone. This subject must be dealt with further in the next chapter. Here we only note, as additions to St. Mark's narrative which we can hardly doubt, that our Lord had indeed sought often to gather the children of Jerusalem under His wings, and that, in return, a bitter animosity to Him was growing.

As we approach the close, another test question as to the trustworthiness of this Gospel arises. Was the Last Supper, as the first three Gospels imply, the Paschal meal, or, as this Gospel says, was our Lord crucified at the time of the killing of the Paschal lamb? It was surely easy for Christians years later to assume mistakenly that the first Eucharist was the Passover; and the report of His instructions to two disciples to secure a room for the Passover, and of His moving words, "With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you" (a desire which may not have been fulfilled), may easily have been misinterpreted later. On the other hand, we might indeed think it easy for one who regarded our Lord as the Paschal lamb to wish to fix the time of the crucifixion as this Gospel fixes it; but it would be amazing that, when the other view was before him in a narrative carrying great authority, he should for a preference of that kind have contradicted that authority without information of his own to back him. Moreover, any idea that we can form of the situation at Jerusalem makes it probable that the

Jewish authorities would take all possible pains to dispatch the matter in hand before the Feast of the Passover began, and St. Mark himself has recorded their anxiety to do this. All likelihood is then in favor of the story as told in the Fourth Gospel.

Lastly, our attention is claimed by two remarkable omissions in the part of this Gospel which deals closely with events also recorded in St. Mark. The first is that of the incident in the Last Supper which we may call the institution of the Eucharist. It is almost incredible that a Christian, about the end of the first century, either did not believe in that act of institution or was uninterested in it. Chapter vi of this Gospel may fairly be taken as making it specially unlikely in the case of this author. Yet this Gospel, though it takes up what St. Mark tells about Judas and about St. Peter at the supper, and deals with it in a way which adds to the interest of the story, is blankly silent about the bread and wine. The second is the omission of the scene at the public trial before the Sanhedrim. Our Lord's ultimate confession at that trial is, as we shall see later, the very climax of the account of His revelation of Himself as given in St. Mark. St. Mark's story of the matter is not traversed in this Gospel by a wholly different account of the same transaction, as a reader of our Authorized Version might suppose. The true rendering of the verse, John xviii, 24, in the Revised Version makes it clear that the whole scene of that public trial, which was bound to take place, is here dismissed with two verses — 24 and 28 — implying that it did take place, and (between those) with that conclusion of the story of Peter's denial which preceding passages in this Gospel made necessary. In any complete story of these events, as they had impressed the men concerned, the scene at the public trial must have been made

prominent. If this writer, who knew the Second Gospel, had wished to correct its account of the trial scene, we know that he would not have hesitated to do so. What he does is simply to omit the scene. But he gives us another scene which went before it, and for which he implies that he had a special source of information. This is an informal examination of our Lord, during the hours that had to elapse between His arrest and the daytime, when the trial could lawfully take place, in the special apartments of Annas, the chief of that seemingly most unpleasant family of which the high-priesthood was for a long time the property. In this additional scene there is no doctrinal purpose served, but it is a scene full of character and life, which really enriches that history which we obtain as a whole when we take the Gospels together. Notice also the scene before Pilate in this Gospel. Our Lord, in John xviii, 37, does not deny that He is a king, as the Messiah was to be; but He does not allow Himself to be taken as affirming it without an explanation of the wholly new character of His Kingship. This is exactly in keeping with St. Matthew's correction of St. Mark (mentioned in a note to the next chapter), in the scene before the Sanhedrim.

There is only one natural way of interpreting these two omissions. The writer treats his readers as knowing the facts sufficiently from St. Mark.

I would recall in one sentence certain points which corroborate what is here said, but which have been sufficiently mentioned in our earlier survey of the literary characteristics of this Gospel; and I may now sum up.

We must fully recognize that this Evangelist writes, as indeed in a less degree did the others, but much more markedly than they, with a special preaching purpose — not exactly with a controversial purpose, but with a view

no doubt to tendencies which he thought enfeebling to Christianity. And we must recognize what indeed is harder to allow for exactly, that he chose a peculiar and highly poetical method of his own, which is not that of a man who would simply record historical facts in due order and proportion or with any pretense to completeness, though it is even less that of an aloof philosopher or of a mere contentious theologian. These two causes may have overridden his strictly historical purpose in more than one respect and to an extent of which in some instances we can hardly feel certain; for he is a many-sided writer — few more so; his moods are intense, and they may have been variable. It is arguable that he might sometimes be carried to a serious extent beyond what the information before him — or, alternatively, his exact memory — justified. This should be remembered. It is certain that he had neither the wish nor the space to carry his historical purpose to the full length which we should demand of him if we wished to make a complete "harmony of the Gospels" for the whole period of the history concerned.

Nevertheless, there can be no doubt whatever that the main features of his narrative are dictated by an interest of the most intense kind in broad historical truth as such; that this interest goes beyond broad outlines of history and attracts him at times to details which might relatively be called petty; that this interest is of no dry or in any way pedantic kind, but living, personal, and loving; and that with these qualities there goes, what is very common in genial and imaginative natures, a frequently displayed liking for exactness.

And there can be no doubt that he had at command a store of actual information which, as the many and various points at which we can detect it show us, must have

been large. For apart from the many little things that I have passed over, which seem to show knowledge of the land and the times, there are a number of points in which he conflicts — knowingly, we may be sure — with what St. Mark says or seems to say, or supplements it in a manner which somewhat surprises us; and the balance of probability, so far as we can estimate it, is in his favor in so many of these instances, and to such an extent, as to be conclusive.

It is, lastly, evident that he wrote with deliberate regard to St. Mark's Gospel, intending to add something which was lacking in it and, where necessary, to correct it. And the manner in which he carries out this purpose, omitting matters which would have been most germane to his purpose if his book had stood alone, makes it unquestionable to me that he assumes St. Mark's narrative. To the extent to which he does not correct St. Mark, he corroborates him.

I pass now to a question which is more important, and which is independent of the accuracy of this Gospel in regard to external events. I shall argue in the next chapter that this Gospel in any case gives us a view of our Lord's personality upon which we may rely. That argument can, I think, stand on its own bottom; and I had better, perhaps, explain that my conclusion was formed — and the following chapter was in substance written — long before I had much studied the subject of the present chapter or suspected to what a great extent this Gospel is replete with actual history. None the less, the conviction which I shall urge, that our Lord's whole being and bearing are set forth in a true light by St. John's follower, unless, indeed, it be by St. John, gains strength, since we have here seen that that writer handled lesser matters of history with knowledge and discernment.

IX

OUR LORD AS SEEN IN THIS GOSPEL

What does this Gospel tell us about our Lord's mind and ways of dealing, as He bore Himself, a man among men, upon this earth? I shall forbear for a while the question closely associated with this, of the doctrine which He taught concerning His real being and His mission. I am speaking here of the character by which He impressed Himself on those who were nearest to Him. For He certainly made an impress upon them by the way in which He spoke with and treated them and others, before they ever sought to define His relation with God. The manner of His action and the qualities which they saw in Him are the things about which their memory could least deceive itself. If a writer with sympathy and imaginative power, who presumably had come much under the influence of any of them, does convey to us some definite impression in this respect, that impression would demand attentive consideration even if we assumed that in other respects he was romancing.

This writer does convey to us such an impression, very clear to the mind, though not easy to set on paper. And if we ask whether that impression is trustworthy, we really possess a very sufficient test of its worth. For we have already from other sources some image of Jesus as

He was, and if we find that anything in this Gospel renders it more intelligible and more living, find that, this further source being added, a more real person and a greater stands before us, reason will suggest that that person is not the product of any fancy, or of any queer turn taken by the history of ancient thought.

Let me first point out that we do possess outside this Gospel a standard by which we can judge what it tells us in this matter, and then ask where we should look in this Gospel for the clearest traces of our Lord.

Great numbers of ordinary readers have derived, mainly from the first three Gospels, a knowledge of Jesus Christ amounting to what, though my own phrase jars on me a little, I can only call personal acquaintance. People have remarked lately that we know very little about our Lord. That is true of a part of the details which biographers generally labor to tell us, but this sense of acquaintance with His person, which those of us who are interested in Him at all possess, really far exceeds anything similar that we possess in regard to any other historical figure. In occasional moments of confidence two of us could discuss together what Jesus Christ would have said or done in any given circumstances. We should do so with a reality of interest, and what is more, with a prospect of fairly definite result, to which there is certainly no parallel. To suppose that this figure that we know is a creation either of art or of accident would be absurd. Yet if corroboration is wanted for the idea which we thus draw from the Gospels, corroboration is ready. In early writers so different as Clement of Rome, St. James, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, St. Peter, the author of the Acts, and St. Paul with the peculiar and penetrating knowledge which he gained as a persecutor, we find concordant testimony to what might loosely be called the

Christian rule of conduct, accepted from the first, or rather to the Christian pattern of manhood and womanhood. The traits of this pattern are those of the historic Jesus. The only rule is "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." The pattern has, above all, this utterly singular feature which again we can hardly ascribe either to art or to accident: it is originally the type of a man with the intellect and temperament of genius, and with will and nerves of steel, engaged upon a strange, tremendous enterprise, yet it is without hesitation taken home for personal use by people whom differences of intelligence, temperament, circumstance, vocation, strength, race, age, sex, would seem to place immeasurably far from Him. In this confidently challenging statement of the case there are many points over which a critical reader will stop and ask questions — some of them to be faced later on. But common sense leans against the view which I believe to be the strict alternative to my own: it makes it hard to think of the Christian ideal, which is a substantial presence in the world, as connected mainly by accident with a Jesus of Nazareth whose flesh-and-blood attributes lie hidden in a region of myth.

It is, then, not a fanciful proceeding, not a matter of asking what would be nice to believe and straightway believing it, if we seek next for what this Gospel contributes to a knowledge of our Lord, which would be very considerable without it. There is a section of it, Chapters xiii to xvii inclusive, in which, apart from doctrinal preconceptions, ordinary readers are apt to think Him vividly present. To this and to Chapter xii, which may be said to form the transition to this from the preceding section of the Gospel, I shall turn first. There are, however, considerable parts of the preceding section of the Gospel about which, as a matter of fact, many such readers have

precisely the opposite feeling. I shall turn later on to that portion and ask whether the discordant effect which it produces does, if put at its highest, drive us to suspect that after all the Evangelist was ignorant of Jesus Christ. It will be at once noticed that Chapters xiii to xvii are in one way by far the most important part of the Gospel. We know well from the first Epistle what were the ideas which were most strongly impressed upon the circle from which this Gospel came, and it is in this section of it, far more than elsewhere, that those ideas have full and insistent expression. A little further consideration will show us that, so far as concerns the character and teaching of our Lord and not the mere circumstances of His career, this section possesses an authority in which what precedes it is — comparatively, at least — lacking.

For, assuming that he writes with some knowledge and understanding, on what parts of his subject will this Evangelist's knowledge and understanding be greatest? He is occupied, as has been said, with a double theme: how Jesus Christ was rejected by the mass of those who should have been "his own," and what He imparted to the few who "received him." The two central acts, as it were, of his drama are respectively concerned in the main with the two sides of this contrast. Now take on the one hand our Lord's intimate converse in a supreme moment with a few who were very near and dear, converse in which the Evangelist would have us think his own informant was in a way the nearest of them. Take on the other hand our Lord's controversies with enemies, controversies at which "that disciple" may sometimes have been present, desiring — it is probable — to call down fire from Heaven, but in which he took no part, did not of course sympathize with the Jews, and could not possibly at the time have fully understood our Lord — contro-

versies which culminated in the cruel act which must have eclipsed all other memory of them. Of which of these would that disciple's memory be more certain to guard, long after, a deep and faithful impression? In the case of which did the play of later meditation conduce to fuller understanding (even though the words might be lost), and in the use of which did it lead on the contrary to intensification of a feeling that might distort the actual fact? Which furnished of necessity the staple of his oral teaching — marked by that iteration which the Epistles of St. John reflect — of his own intimate pupils? Finally, if we consider the pupil who ultimately enshrined his teaching in writing, with the motive, which appears in the first Epistle, of conserving the mutual love of the flock, and with the motive too of marking the finality of their severance from Judaism — in which of these parts of the Gospel would he probably display the more genuine desire and the more intelligent capacity of rendering truly, though with whatever freedom of rhetorical composition, the core of what he had been taught? In which part would he have been likely (in spite of the many minor details which he might retain correctly in notes or memory) to fall into some radical misinterpretation of the past situation as a whole?

These questions can only be answered in one way. We are assuming the writer to have been a hearer of an actual disciple, though only a slight change would be needed in the form of our inquiry if we took him to be that disciple himself; on either assumption we are most likely to find the clear impress of the historic Jesus in the account given of His converse with His disciples in Chapters xiii to xvii, and what immediately leads up to that account. In considering it we shall be interested not so much to ask whether the whole scene passed quite as is related, but

rather whether Jesus faced death just so. Let us begin with what Chapter xii sets before us.

The long tale of controversies with the ruling powers in Jerusalem has ended; their ugly plan is now formed. He knows that well, and regards it with no fanatical insensitiveness to the impending horror ("Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour"), but first and last with the conviction which is all the more that of sane heroism and high reason, that His hideous doom is the consummation of His work. "The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified. . . . Father, save me from this hour. But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name." If, as is possible, the actual scene in Chapter xii (from verse twenty onwards) is imaginary, the important fact is that our Lord's attitude of mind, there set out in dramatic fashion, is precisely that which the other Gospels attribute to Him in contemplation of His death, from the first warning He gives the disciples to the agony in the Garden.

We cannot avoid noticing how the scene is introduced. Our Lord learns through Philip and Andrew that certain Greeks wish to see Him. It is this fact on which He at once seizes as the augury of the immediately impending catastrophe and triumph. Whether this is fact or an extraordinarily felicitous stroke of drama might be doubted by some people and is immaterial. In the historical retrospect in which we — like St. Paul, St. Luke, the nameless writer to the Hebrews, and the writer of our St. Matthew (see xxviii, 18 to 20) — can see the Crucifixion, the link of association between that turning point in religious history and the first real approach of foreigners to Jesus is obvious; but the question is: Taking our Lord as we discern Him in the other Gospels, and in the light of His

followers' actions within a few years after His death, can we be sure that the drawing of all nations unto Him, the breaking down of "the middle wall of partition," the destruction of the ties which linked true knowledge of God with the ascendency of two cliques and the nationalism of a tribe, the casting out of the "prince of this world" from any lodgment in the innermost sphere of man's religious faith, were things clearly present to His troubled soul, as achievements that could be wrought by His agony and could be wrought by nothing else? Any full answer would be long; but personally I cannot doubt that this was His clear and conscious design, and cannot doubt that in those dark hours it was most fully present to Him, linked with His care for the little flock whom He was leaving and through whose weakness, then most fully apparent, His design was to work. However this may be, He is represented — and beyond all reasonable doubt truly represented — in this passage with the foreknowledge, suddenly made full, of torture and ignominy and death immediately before Him, and with the resolute conviction that somehow this is His success.

This leads immediately to the scene at the supper table, in five amazing chapters of which the keynote is at once given in the words: "When Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." It is probable indeed that many people who have become really familiar with the New Testament turn more often to the narrative in the other Gospels of the first Communion Service and of the agony in the Garden, and find the dialogues and discourses in St. John — betraying, as perhaps they do, the Evangelist's own literary manner — less moving after awhile than such brief sentences as those in St. Luke:

"With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer"— a desire which, it seems, was not (as St. Luke assumed) fulfilled; "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations"; "I am among you as he that serveth." But it is equally probable that they have learned in large part from St. John's Gospel to feel the full significance of the simpler story.

This Evangelist does not tell again the greatest episode of that evening, the institution of the Eucharist, or describe the agony in the Garden; those things were already well known, and he only repeats here just so much of what St. Mark had already told as was needed to give the full bearing of the conversation which he does relate. Of course a great deal had really passed on that evening between the Master and the disciples besides what St. Mark had recounted. This must have included some definite incidents hard to forget — as the washing of the disciples' feet would have been; but the most part of it must have been, like so much in every real scene of which the recollection stirs our imagination, insusceptible of literal report. Looks and silences, hints and allusive words, things of which the record, so far as there could be any, would be meaningless, yet had an imperishable effect upon those who were there; and to their full thought thereafter not the least part must have been contributed by things which at the moment merely surprised, and of which memory might retain a few phrases without context or retain no words at all.

In such cases, however, both poets and other writers may try, as this writer to a great extent had to try, to produce in another way what they could not produce by any attempt at a literal record, namely, some appreciation by those who were not there of the chief impressions received by those who were there. And when they do so

it is often easy to say whether they have analyzed a situation truly or drawn the main traits of a character as they were or as they were not. Luther, speaking of this supper, "full of friendly heart intercourse," declares: "Never since the world began was there a more delightful meal than that." The "simple, quiet table-talk" which the scene presented to him seems to have become, in the view of advanced criticism, a frigid artifice for exhibiting theological theorems. But are not the living traits of the man of flesh and blood there, and has the theology any meaning without them?

Dr. Johnson once maintained in argument that friendship, such as he really supremely valued, had no place in the system of universal benignity which Christianity taught. He was confuted — and gladly owned it — by a Quaker lady to whom he looked for support, but who simply referred him to the case of the beloved disciple. There is indeed a strange but far from rare perversion of the teaching that bulks largest in St. Matthew and St. Luke, which resolves Christianity into a diffused, loose, and tepid philanthropy, and sets at the head of it — as a sadly common type of religious picture testifies — a thin-blooded Christ. It is St. John's Gospel that, with an amplitude and tragic iteration which had no place in the others, confutes this insidious debasement of our religion. The centre of that circle of friends and comrades, dearly loved and loved to the end, in which the beloved disciple was but one whose special attractiveness received its natural and uninvidious response, is a preëminently warm-blooded Being, to whose strong heart, as we are forced to feel, no wholesome human passion could be alien.

The whole passage which, opening with the words already quoted, winds to a close with the three verses beginning, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast

given me be with me where I am," is one which it would be distasteful to finger, but the chief aspect of it needs to be emphasized. Perhaps the writer who composed it was intensely theological, and theology may suggest to us now what is arid and pretentiously unmeaning. Perhaps, too, he approaches and enters a region of wrought-up religious sentiment which is not quite that of the rest of the New Testament and in which we should not feel it wholesome to try to dwell. But this, if it is so, does not do away with the fact that the circumstances in which the Master and the disciples must really have been placed are vividly conceived throughout. Read with realization of those circumstances, these chapters portray their great subject as standing in a perfect human relationship to the friends that He loved, clear-sighted, firm and gentle, with easy command and with exquisite tenderness. The very near prospect of death is before Him, with nothing lacking to its terrors, fully realized by Him, half realized by them, and with a preceding ordeal which He is preparing Himself to face alone. "Ye shall leave me alone . . . and yet I am not alone."

All the while it is not only Himself but them, whose work is but now to begin, that He must prepare. The full human painfulness of parting is there, felt for His own sake with the added pain that literally they will leave Him alone, and that spiritually they comprehend Him very little, and felt for their sake with the yearning for those left behind which is the main element in most people's fear of their anticipated quiet and normal death. But the fact is firmly seized, a perfectly simple fact of ordinary psychology, let it be remembered: "It is expedient for you that I go away," for with Him there to lean upon they cannot possibly become possessed by the spirit that is in Him. He is going to demand their utmost

of them, in the happy assurance that they do love Him; they will therefore keep His commandment that they love one another; but He makes no such overstrained demand as self-centred and exacting affection is apt to make; there is no resentment in His prevision that there will be no very noble or comforting demonstration of fidelity to Him in the hour that now impends. One even of the winnowed and selected little group that had sat down at that meal is in the plot. He has seen through him and with matchless human dignity of restrained reproach gets rid of his presence, breaking the very discourse in which He does so by washing his feet with those of the rest; and the poignant disgust of this discovery does not infuse any trace of false suspicion into His talk with the others. Most of these are men of whom nothing recorded indicates peculiar intellect or force; they were to play their part as the nucleus of a world-wide movement merely, as it seems, because they were brave men and warm-hearted and simple and true. They are represented here as interrupting Him merely with expressions of puzzled wonder as to the drift of His discourse, and He meets this with a patience wholly kind. He has picked out the great man among them, the superficially vacillating character whom He surnamed Peter. Peter breaks in with a genuine protest of his sure fidelity; that is sure enough, but Peter will stumble badly at the first step he takes alone; the quick unillusioned reply tells him so, and instantly resumes the interrupted discourse with this surprising sequence: "The cock shall not crow until thou hast denied me thrice. . . . Let not your heart be troubled."

This is a picture of a great human commander and a great human friend, in a crisis of which the nature, which seems to some of us stupendous and to others merely

incomprehensible, ought not to hide from anyone its living analogy with the trials that men and women know.

Into this real picture theology enters because it really belongs there; and it affects the whole picture in one way which I must indicate before passing on. Here and in the other Gospels our Lord has the untroubled conviction that He partakes without stint or limit in the eternal mind and being of that Father whom He feels so near. There is a difference, which cannot be done away, between the sense in which He is the Son of God and the sense in which He gives to all who will receive Him power to become the sons of God. The very words in which the disciples are here being taught to feel His abiding nearness to them after He has gone from their sight are words which confirm their recognition of the difference between Him and any of themselves or any other man of whom they or we have ever heard.

This is of course an essential part of the meaning of these chapters, as indeed of the whole of the New Testament. I shall not pause here to say anything about its remoteness from common — and by no means specially modern — ways of thinking, or to ask how we are to associate it with what I am next about to observe. But I am bound, before making the observation which I here wish to make, to note that this difference is absolute, and that it is idle to blink it, whether in studying this book or in any thorough consideration of Christianity in the world and in ourselves. Nevertheless "my Father" is "your Father"; "To them gave he power to become the sons of God"; and (to turn to another source) "After this manner . . . pray ye: Our Father —." The staggering distance at which Jesus Christ in this passage places Himself, did certainly place Himself, from all other of the sons of men does not in the least weaken the force

of this further consideration: The disciples are to live thereafter, and all that believe through them are to live, as men and women governed by the presence of God who is their Father. Many men and women have in a great degree so lived and do so live. Here in the midst of the disciples stood a man so governed and so confronting life and death. And, since for the moment we are not concerned with the whole meaning of these chapters, we may avoid the mental strain which any intellectually honest consideration — on either side — of our Lord's claim really exacts, and think of this figure of a great human commander and friend as the figure also of one who was religious as man can be religious. He is intensely aware of God; they may be so. They pray; He prays.

Now we may observe that there are those for whom in practice conflicting claims of moral duty which baffle casuistry have solved themselves. Difficult questions of fact and of the calculation of probable consequences are of course before them in plenty, but they can tackle them and take their chance of judging them correctly, without the vacillation, the depression, and the fundamental inconsistency to which most of us are victims, and which spring from a conflict in our ultimate aims and in our basic sentiments. This is markedly the case with the men and women with whom we know that the thought of God is habitual and near, and Jesus Christ in these chapters is the pattern of such people. Again, in men and women of this sort a keen and ready sympathy for humankind, such as Jesus Christ exhibits throughout the other Gospels, combines easily with and reënforces that intense love for a few which in St. John's Gospel gives to His personality a fuller graciousness and strength. Unlike most of us they experience no conflict between that sensitive care for those dear to them and that fearless

maintenance of a robust individuality which here are the joint and harmonious marks of our Lord's consciousness of God.

Now this attempt of mine at characterization must be full of imperfections, for which the reader can and will make allowance. It may indeed offend him, not, I think, as being fanciful, but as a piece of clumsy familiarity with One who is already very real to his mind. But these chapters in particular of the Gospel do, in some such way as I have indicated, set before us a figure of our Lord which is very vivid indeed. And this figure so far is true to the vivid impression which we get from the other Gospels, and adds to its consistency, its compactness, and its force. Certainly, too, it is a most real and what is called "convincing" figure. One might at first wish to argue that such epithets should not be lightly bestowed, as if the congruity of the figure with some imagination of ours proved anything; but if we tried to represent to ourselves, in relation to all that we know of his times and can guess about himself, a literary man somewhere about, say, A.D. 100, constructing this figure out of our imagination, we should find him a very unconvincing figure.

Yet there are also elements in the Gospel according to St. John which jar upon many readers, because they seem to clash with the thoughts about Jesus Christ with which the other Gospels fill us or with any image of Him which we can conceive. As I have indicated, these discordant elements are chiefly to be found in the preceding section of the Gospel, with which I have already contrasted these chapters. To be exact we must notice that these preceding chapters, too, contain passages — notably, of course, that which has fixed the Good Shepherd in the affections of Christians ever since — which have contributed much to men's ideas of the Lord whom they

revere; and on the other hand that the discordance might be traced to some extent in the chapters which we have just considered, perhaps even found echoed in the First Epistle. The question thus arises: Are we entitled to pick out what is so attractive in this Gospel and to say this was what the writer really knew about our Lord? Should we not take what is discordant in his presentation of our Lord as proof that he was really far from the influence of any true remembrance of Him?

I will set out as fully and plainly as I can the things in this Gospel which people do find repugnant to the view of Jesus Christ which they get from other sources and which they believe. I shall then ask what, when put at their highest, these things show.

We may begin with a point at which the repugnancy lies in what this Gospel does not say. Reading it right up to the point where the imminence of death and parting make the human interest intense, we may well be chilled by the absence of practical counsel in detail. There is insistence upon belief, even on love, and insistence upon the general principle that true belief is one with right action: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine"; but the sure and inspiring touch upon actual practice which we find elsewhere seems lacking. The same lack is to be noticed in St. John's great Epistle. The writer reveals with extraordinary force his conviction that the very being of faith is bound up with action; theory and practice, sentiment and act seem to have no separate existence for his mind; yet this is in such general terms that the repetition of it may cease to touch us. When we come to what apparently is given as an account of our Lord's own mission, we look for something more. St. Paul is polemical and doctrinal enough. His favorite doctrine, even more conspicuously than St. John's,

concerns the worthlessness of mere legality or living by a set of rules, and to such an extent that even the author of the wonderful phrase, "the perfect law of liberty," was puzzled by him; yet even St. Paul's most sustained dogmatic or controversial writing cannot close without a profusion of counsels which move us deeply by their tender practicality.

Still more must we think here of the Lord, as He walks and talks in the other Gospels. He, too, is no maker of rules, no decider of cases of conscience; He deals with the details of good conduct by paradox, by parable, by question, and by sheer verbal self-contradiction; none the less at every turn He is illuminating actual life in its petty details and searching the complex strength and weakness of diverse living characters. But through many a page of this Fourth Gospel we see Him in no such guise.

We pass to our Lord's actions, and are forced to wonder a little what has become of Him who "went about doing good." It seems a strange, unhappy feat to have written a Gospel in which no such word as mercy, forgiveness, or compassion ever occurs. There are great works of mercy reported of Him, and looking between the lines, we can easily see in them the evidence of His actual compassion, but the Evangelist prefers to set them in quite another light. To him they have become in part symbolic, but chiefly they are demonstrations of our Lord's power, worked in order to compel a belief in Him — which, by the way, they end by not doing. Some say that the contrast here made is exaggerated, but on the whole this seems to be the express belief of this Evangelist; and it is one which the other Evangelists expressly contradict. In them our Lord refuses to use His power for the purpose of impressing people; doing so is one of the temptations that at the beginning He set aside; works even of healing

are not so much His proper mission as an interruption to it, but He must do them because He pities. Here no doubt there are, in connection with miracles, expressions of an austere, august beneficence: "My Father worketh hitherto and I work"; "I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day." These are wonderful words, surely spoken sometime by our Lord; but they are not quite the equivalents of the words, "I have compassion on the multitude"; and it is to the Jesus moved by this simpler and gentler motive that strong men ever since have bent the knee.

Again, this Gospel and St. John's Epistles, when compared with other Gospels and Epistles, force upon one a suspicion that the fire of love which glows within the brotherhood is limited in the range of its warmth by a very solid barrier that shuts out the world. At the same time, is not the line being drawn between believer and unbeliever with a decision liable to dangerous fallacy, a definiteness with which our Lord did not and no other should dare draw it? This last question is hard to put without misleading ourselves. A real brotherhood must in some way be separate; its principles have a definite meaning, and they are or are not accepted. Life is full of occasions when a man must be for something or against it, and perhaps the worst type of avoidance in God's eyes is that which on a famous occasion adopted the formula of "neutrality even in thought." For ourselves "we must be severe with ourselves," having no indecision in our choice of a way of life, and in matters of belief, when we have some real light, avoiding that mere laziness of judgment which may pass for liberality. The difficulty which arises is in regard to severity toward others. For this writer and his teacher it had become, we have reason to think, a necessary task to prevent their community

from being merged in surrounding masses, and its belief, which must be emphatic or nothing, from fading out amid a chaos of loose, fantastic ideas. So it is not surprising that we miss here certain notes which sound loudly elsewhere in the New Testament; only, in missing them we miss what we believe to have been the accents of our Lord. Take St. Peter's splendid summary of duty: "Honor all men; love the brotherhood; fear God; honor the king." Half of that is repeated loud and clear in this Gospel and the Epistle; upon the other half there is silence. Nay, even in the marvelous Chapter xvii of the Gospel there come, as from our Lord's own lips, the words, "I pray not for the world." Put in the abstract, the question between "the world"— a term which may stand for a very real and very evil force — and that which should detach us in this sense from the world, is most difficult to discuss; for those (or him) who wrote this Gospel and Epistle we may suppose that the difficulty was a practical one. But other writers in the New Testament manage to convey a spirit which moves above the difficulty. "Brethren" and "the brotherhood" are indeed names for a special society, but the Fatherhood of God is more inclusive, and the motive to be perfect as He is perfect covers all human relations. As for our Lord Himself, we know well how He treated limitations of sympathy; the question "Who is my neighbor?" was left forever unanswered, but the spirit in which the question was thrust at Him met with the most famous counter ever dealt by His quick sword.

To carry this point a little further, we must briefly notice that our Lord in the other Gospels is very discouraging to any feeling of being saved or of belonging to a saved community of those who can say, with St. John, "Now are we the sons of God." To the question, "Are

there few that shall be saved?" the answer is in effect, "Do not assume that you are so." True, He calls to special tasks chosen servants who are bidden — which is in actual effect no discouragement — to think themselves "unprofitable servants"; but around them and around Him we see a host of people who come into contact with Him, and whom that contact blesses ("Thy sins be forgiven thee"), but who are not called to be disciples or definite adherents, or who are even told not to be disciples. This elasticity — for want of a better word — belongs to a time when not a Church but a small band who are to found one is being formed; yet it is remarkable how little the sympathies of the greatest missionary of the Church, when founded, had become restricted. If we find no positive sign of such vitality of human sympathy here, it means perhaps that the writer was a divine rather than a missionary. The point here is not to find fault with him, but to notice a further trait of our Lord, as we see Him elsewhere, which is not to be found here.

But there is more to come. The Jesus of the other Gospels is meek and, above all, forgiving. Is He so here, and has the Evangelist himself acquired His temper? For all His strength and sternness our Lord can say, "I am meek and lowly in heart"; and St. Matthew's most telling citation of prophecy declares that "He shall not strive nor cry, neither shall his voice be heard in the streets," nor can we doubt that this expresses some characteristic of His bearing. But in this Gospel His voice is heard in continual angry contest. It has been said: "Probably the Jews did wrangle so." Precisely. That is just why this Jew writer writes so; but did the Jew of whom he writes wrangle so? It is true that in the Synoptic Gospels He can be angry, very angry, for example when the disciples would have kept back mothers from troubling

Him with their little children. True that in those Gospels He denounces scribes and Pharisees with vigorous wealth of denunciation. But this is a manly anger. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites . . . therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation"; but why? Not because they rejected His claim, but because they taught that cheating formula of "Corban"; because "ye bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders"; because "ye have taken away the key of knowledge; ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered." In that delightful country in which habitual readers of Matthew, Mark, and Luke may walk, the thunder sometimes peals, and it can strike real terror. It is the sound of doom to certain folk, the unpitying and the unforgiving. Accordingly it is written: "They crucified him. . . . Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." And His servants in the Acts speak no word of vengeance; not for themselves, not even for Him. Strange that no echo of this wonderful note which sounds throughout the story is heard when we read the Fourth Gospel. The very design of this book is fraught with the writer's anger. Peter and Stephen and Paul, in following Christ, had made Christ's note their own. "And now, brethren," says St. Peter, in the Acts, "I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers." This Evangelist has consecrated half his book to showing that it was not through ignorance; it is as if his bitter retrospect made him cry: "Ne leur pardonne pas; car ils savent ce qu'ils font." This bitterness of judgment against the nation of his kindred is imported by him into the speeches of Jesus. Along with it there is no doubt in these speeches a certain pathos. Jesus, pleading ever more insistently for His right against adversaries who become ever more

implacable, is made to speak as a good man might who felt himself brought helplessly up against the really hard element in mankind. But if we hesitate to ascribe to Jesus the note of personal bitterness, we shall hesitate equally to ascribe to Him that of self-pity: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me." Twice we are told that, with eyes unused as we may be sure to the melting mood, "Jesus wept." The one occasion is told of by the Fourth Evangelist in a passage which deals with our Lord's relations with His friends; He wept for the death of a friend. The other occasion was as follows. Jesus was coming up to the feast in full contemplation of His own doom, and He turned a corner of the road. "And when he was come near he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known —"

His tears were for the doomed city of His race. And this, with one other speech of equally tender sorrow, is the principal reference in the other Gospels to that very topic of the rejection which the Fourth Evangelist made one of his two chief topics and handled as has just been said.

There remains, however, a point in which the conflict between our authorities seems to be far sharper. In this Gospel our Lord begins to publish His own personal claim from the very first. From the first He confronts the Jewish people with challenging statements of that claim; He works miracles expressly to demonstrate it; to deny the claim so demonstrated is sin — the sin. It is, at the latest, considerably before His last visit to Jerusalem, and of course His trial, that the claim has been very definitely expressed in its fullest scope and height, and in its most provocative form. The story in St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke differs from this all along the line by insisting that He positively forbade any sort of publication of the claim that He was the Son of God. We may note at once

one further very marked contradiction of an idea that is most prominent in St. John's Gospel. No sort of gainsaying of Christ's personal attributes could, according to the other Gospels, be His ground of quarrel with any man. Whatever may be — and we can guess it quite sufficiently — the character of the unforgivable sin, "Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him."

There is for some people a haunting interest, though an idle one, in the question of how our Lord's own understanding of Himself grew, as His own growth in wisdom and in mental "stature" came to fullness, under the discipline of the appointed task now at last in progress, varied by those intervals of solitary thought and prayer, and with the change which had to come over the scope and aim of His effort. However that may be, in the Synoptic Gospels He came "preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God," not then a novel phrase, and one as to which the change which He set Himself to work in its popular meaning, a change decided from the first but gradual in operation, is familiar enough to us. Power and authority Christ does claim — or rather, He uses them. He is appointed to do a certain work, and His total absence of hesitation or diffidence in taking to Himself with the full magnitude of the work the full necessary authority is one of the most indubitable features of His character. But the business in hand is the Kingdom — not Himself. There is here the whole difference which again and again in history has distinguished the man who leads and governs from the man interested in obtaining due acknowledgment of his right to govern. He could have easily aroused a movement to make Him a king, and we are led to suppose, by the narrative of the Temptation, that He felt within Himself the genius that might have given lustre to the kingship. That kingship of course He

would not have. Nevertheless there was a place of pre-eminence recognized in current Jewish ideas, which He not only would accept but implicitly claimed, with a design of the future which He was prepared to accept if He could strip the Jewish term, "Messiah," of all associations with earthly kingship and stamp upon it a new meaning of His own.

The Jews, in the Law and the Prophets so "fulfilled" as He has come to fulfill them, possessed as a national treasure the one pure and popular religion, spiritual and with practical driving force, intellectually unemasculated, intimate in its appeal, universal in its scope of membership, which was fitted to be the religion of mankind. His mission at the outset was significantly limited to the nation which professed that religion, but among them it was by no means limited to the instruction of selected disciples; His teaching seems to have been just as wide-cast as was consistent with not spending His all for a superficial effect. The first aim of the mission was certainly to awaken His people genuinely and generally to the full meaning of this religion of their own. Purified and rekindled, that religion would cease to be their exclusive own, but its passing to be the world's religion would be their real and foretold and only possible national glory. Therefore His aim came into sharp collision with the actual aims of Jewish nationalism. Those aims, however hard to relinquish, could in any case only lead to destruction. He appears to have seen this fact clearly, and to have contemplated with contentment that such aims should be hopeless, yet with the agony of a patriot at the predictable horror which their failure involved. His aim came into still sharper collision with the class interests of the influential sect and the powerful caste which, though officially at variance, combined to form the nucleus of Jewish

nationalism. In this collision He was bound to go under, in the usual course of the world's affairs. In the early days there seems to have been no illusion in His evident happiness; "The days will come. . . ." But a distinct time of crisis came, in the midst of which these Gospels set the vision on the Mount of Transfiguration. The fate upon which He might be rushing, yet need not have rushed, was in His clear contemplation. In that fate He saw the real triumph of His adventure, and a stupendous prospect of that which He was really doing lay before Him. It was at this time that He elicited from His followers the belief as to Himself which by then had dawned on their minds. And immediately thereupon He told them of the death, so unfitted to their expectations, which He was soon to die.

Here, in any case, is the quite clear-cut sequence of facts, as St. Mark conceived them, concerning His declaration of Himself whether as the Messiah or as the Son of God. From an early moment His character is recognized by some others. The devils proclaim Him Son of God and are bidden to be muzzled. Right through to the end proclamations of Him, of a sort more intelligible to us, in that or any other capacity are steadily checked by Him so far as possible. When in close intimacy the disciples own Him Son of God, He neither rejects nor accepts that title, so far as we are told, but enjoins silence. At last He stands before that council which wishes His death but must find some evidence of a charge that will justify it in its own eyes for demanding His death of Pilate — of course, on some other charge. Many men have stood in similar peril and have escaped. False witnesses were brought against Him and did not help their side. He was questioned Himself and kept absolute silence. At last the direct question was asked Him, whether He was the

Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the blessed. What if He had continued silent? What if, as at other times He had delighted to do, He had used in some confounding manner His unrivaled mastery of wordplay? But the claim which He would not utter to glorify Himself He would not falsify in fear of shame and agony. Then and then only, as this simple chronicler takes it, did Jesus avow Himself to be the Messiah, the Christ.[1] This is the Jesus whom men worship.

Nothing in St. John's Gospel can discredit substantially this story, which describes in so distinct and impressive a manner how our Lord gradually unfolded His nature to those who had long continued to follow Him. There were reasons for the reticence of it, to which I shall return later, which are plain enough to us; but there was nothing to make His disciples invent it all long afterward, when they were preaching Him as Christ and Son of God. The discourses in question in this Gospel, on the other hand, are of such a kind that as they stand they could have been addressed to no audience — however different from the Galilean audience — by anyone who wished to persuade, least of all by one whom we see elsewhere to have been a master of such speech as would move the hearts and touch the innermost recesses in the minds of those with whom He was immediately dealing. But they abound in language which was full of power and beauty to believers in Him afterward, and we may well suppose the Evangelist to have been influenced by this when he composed these chapters.

[1] St. Matthew does not, like St. Mark, make Him say, "I am," but, "Thou hast said it." This, I gather, was not a phrase equivalent to "Yes," but as ordinarily used would suggest rather, "You may say so if you like." Considering the different senses that might be put on the terms of the high priest's question and particularly on the term, "Christ" ("Messiah"), it is not inconceivable that our Lord used this guarded phrase. But this does not affect what I have said; for the phrase was in itself a refusal to treat the charge now made against Him as untrue, and it was immediately followed by words which so interpreted it as necessarily to cause His condemnation.

Thus, so far as the Fourth Gospel here gives an impression which we cannot reconcile with the others, we cannot treat it as an historical authority. But this is not quite a sufficient account of this difficult matter. For we must not take its writer as professing at all to give a full account of our Lord's intercourse with the Jews in Jerusalem. If his teacher or even if he himself was present as a young man in Jerusalem, then his capacity to do that would have been slight, and that is evidently not what he wishes to do. He aims, we can see, at relating scenes in which our Lord appeals emphatically to the Jews and is emphatically rejected; and beyond imparting to these passages his own indignation at that rejection, he has the further aim of making our Lord's appeal full of teaching for those who are now to read it. Scenes so written may give a false historical impression, but it does not follow that there is no kernel of history in them.

We cannot enter into the minds of those who confronted our Lord in Jerusalem or guess how He would deal with them, though we can more or less put ourselves in the position of the peasants who listened to Him on the mountain or the plain, and feel with the disciples who were with Him at the Last Supper. But we know quite enough to be sure that His method among the leaders of the Jews was other than His method with these humbler folk, though doubtless in its aim as gentle. Here were learned men of inquiring mind to whom He may well have uttered sentences pregnant with meaning, to challenge thought which might be fruitful later. Here, too, were important persons with no disposition to inquire, to whom He could only take a challenging tone, giving pause to some by its very confidence and conveying a meaning which might be plain long afterward. And we must observe that in these chapters He is only once said to have

spoken of Himself as the Messiah and then only indirectly; whereas it is probably this title above all others which in the Synoptic Gospels He is so long unwilling to claim. Now to claim that title was to court premature death or public disorder and hopeless misunderstanding of His mission, while possibly the fullest assertion of His unity with the Father would at the worst move some people to deride Him.

Lastly, these chapters of the Gospel abound in sayings which must strike us as having the ring of Jesus Christ and not of a romancer about Him. Two conclusions result from this: first, the discrepancy in this between the Fourth Gospel and our other authorities relates to manner, tone, and circumstances, but not at all so clearly to the substance of the things said. Secondly, it seems probable that here also this writer had historical data.

What conclusions should now be drawn from the ways in which this Gospel falls short, or seems to do so, of presenting to us our Lord as we can believe Him to have been?

To begin with, let us be quit of demanding that one Evangelist or one Apostle should have been able completely to deliver Christ's message or to reflect His life. To Christians, at any rate, it is part of the wonder and delight of the New Testament that the message comes to them in it through many imperfect human instruments. Through their remarkable diversity and their lovable human limitations the greatness of their Master is known. I think that the features attributed to this Gospel as defects are in large part really present and in large part really defects. I have certainly not tried to belittle them; I have suggested that they affect in some degree every part of the Gospel, and the Epistles of St. John as well. But I think they will raise no doubt of the historical truth

of what is most important in the book, if we recall its character and purpose and the temper and circumstances of the writer, about which also some things are plain.

The book, as already said, is a highly artistic composition, designed to emphasize in every possible way certain aspects of our Lord's life, and the very thoroughness with which this design is carried out required the exclusion of much which would have appeared in a simpler telling of the tale, however brief. The primary subject of the writer is manifestly the fullness with which God was revealed in that person whom the writer of the First Epistle speaks of handling and in whom he "beheld" the whole of that revelation; and this subject carries with it inseparably that insistence upon what Jesus Christ was to those who did receive Him, which gives to the one scene where He is alone with His disciples its incomparable power. Yet, as the author himself leads us in his first verses to expect, this scene is to be set against the background of the Jews' rejection of the Christ — a subject which could not be handled with the same sympathy or with the same fullness of understanding, and in his presentation of which the most authentic element was likely to be those thoughts of Jesus about Himself which his disciples did ultimately grasp. These two portions of the book were necessarily of unequal value.

We have noticed also, in the matter of actions and events, a reason for large omissions in the story in the fact that the author assumes another book to be known to his readers. We cannot tell that he knew St. Matthew and St. Luke besides St. Mark, but it is incredible that he did not know an important mass of teaching, handed on orally at first and recorded in some writing before those Evangelists wrote, which they incorporated and which forms the staple of our knowledge of that teaching. He

must have assumed this, too, to be known to his readers. Certainly also we find in his own teacher — or in himself — who wrote the First Epistle a most remarkable determination to concentrate all moral teaching into the one precept of love among the brethren. These considerations go far to explain the absence of much that we miss in this Gospel.

Tradition tells us that St. John and his school had to combat a strange heresy (anyway false) which indeed dissolved Jesus Christ, by making Him through a part of his life no man, and through the rest no Son of God; and the writer of the Epistle is evidently in conflict with some new doctrine. We are aware also of signs that the relations between Christian Jews and others were becoming in some cases bitter, in others conciliatory in a fashion which might swamp Christian belief; and this, of course, added point to the subject of the rejection.

And St. John is recorded — and appears in his Epistles — to have been a man whose devotion to our Lord's person was intimate, passionate, and fierce. This Evangelist, whoever he was, was of like temper. No rebukes aimed in his pages at the Jewish rulers need astonish us; we do best perhaps to take some of them to ourselves.

It is obvious to what these considerations lead us, and I do not wish to follow up further a clue to the study of this Gospel, which I had rather leave for some reader of mine to use himself. But, however modestly, one is bound to apply to such questions as this whatever knowledge of literature and of history one may have. Attempting to do so, I am forced to feel that wider consideration of this Gospel makes the historical worth of the scene at the Last Supper all the more certain. I have no doubt that in that scene we see the true lineaments of our Lord.

X

A FURTHER TEST OF OUR RESULT REQUIRED

The conclusion which I just stated necessarily implies that our Lord Himself held that view of His own being and His own relation to the Father which is set forth in the First Epistle of St. John, and which the Church later endeavored to formulate more precisely in its Creeds. For the words expressing that view of Him which are put into our Lord's own mouth in the dialogue at the Last Supper are vital to the whole tenor and purpose of His discourse there, and if He did not speak of Himself substantially so, that dialogue as a whole is historically worthless. But it is now laid down by many people that our Lord cannot have spoken so; since, it is said, the belief about Him which the words ascribed to Him express formed no part of what the Apostles originally preached, and thus, though it did develop during Apostolic times, it must have been formed by influences which were alien to His teaching.

This fundamental objection to my conclusion must be fairly met, though in trying to do so I must through several chapters leave the Gospel according to St. John out of sight. Some development certainly did come over the belief of the Apostles about our Lord after He had left them. The question is whether that development was due to any other influence than their gradually

growing understanding of Him and of what He had actually taught.

The fact that there was a change in the early Church's view of its Founder, and the reasonableness of asking what caused it, are easily brought home to us. Let us turn to the speeches of St. Peter in the early chapters of the Acts; a single quotation is enough to illustrate their doctrine, and it does not matter here whether the author of the book had, as he may well have had, actual records or memories of these speeches at command, or merely composed them in the light of what was generally remembered in his time as the primitive message of the Apostles. "Therefore," says St. Peter in his first address to the Jews, "let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified." Let us compare this with some of the words ascribed to our Lord in the great discourse of the Fourth Gospel: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. . . . I am in the Father and the Father in me. . . . I came out from the Father and am come into the world: again I leave the world and go unto the Father. . . . And now, Father, glorify thou me . . . with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Something is said in these words of which St. Peter's give us no suggestion. There may be no real conflict, but a different range of ideas is called up. St. Peter speaks the language of a Jew who has been expecting the Jewish Christ or Messiah and who is appealing to the Jews of his time. Our Lord, if He used words like these (or, if He did not, then the writer who imputed them to Him), speaks a language which has appealed to men of other races and to men in all ages since.

We are here forced to think of St. Paul, the chief author

of that revolution by which the Church ceased to be a sect within the Jewish national Church and became the organ of a religion for the world. In more than one way his mission led him to develop or define afresh the faith which he preached, a faith to which he was surprisingly converted, in a Christ whom he had never seen except, as he believed, in a vision. It is a natural conjecture that he and the whole Church after him unconsciously took over into their creed ideas which they really derived from the very people among whom they looked for converts. Men who changed other men's minds on so large a scale and so profoundly must have been receptive in turn, perhaps in some ways more than they knew. May not the Christ whom they had known or heard of have become in their minds a somewhat different figure as they came to preach Him to other nations? And conjecture once so started cannot stop here. It may seem unlikely that the Apostles after the great Pentecost should have ascribed to their Master lesser attributes than He Himself had claimed, but it does not seem at all unlikely that they should have ascribed to Him greater attributes. They, like St. Paul a little later, dwelt amid ideas which they might annex to the name of Jesus. And if we turn to the first three Gospels and find that our Lord's words about Himself there — though for some reason they may startle us less — imply no smaller claim to allegiance than those in St. John, is the ground firm under our feet? These books too were written at a time later than some, or very likely than any, of St. Paul's Epistles, and it may be asked how far what they tell of our Lord and His teaching has been colored by influences other than His. In short, it may be suggested that, from the very moment when His disciples became convinced that He had risen, a process was at

work by which the true outlines of His person and His doctrine were transformed. For Christianity sprang up in a world teeming with religious ideas and movements more varied, more vigorous, and in some respects more interesting than most of us imagine. The reaction of this environment upon it demands attention from any point of view; and it demands it the more because research has lately accumulated much fresh knowledge about this environment, emphasizing many startling similarities between pagan thought and ways and those which we may have imagined were exclusively Christian.

In the following chapters I shall attempt to take stock of the most important elements (for our purpose) in the Jewish thought and tradition from which Christianity sprang, and in that world of pagan thought and religion into which the Church so soon plunged. I shall examine the principal points in which many critics believe that Christian doctrine was drawn from other sources than Christ; and I shall indicate the lines of that actual development of Christian thought of which, as it seems to me, the story is plain upon the face of the New Testament. The answer to the objection which I have to meet will be plain enough. I should wish, beyond answering it, to show the place of this Gospel in that greater whole, the New Testament.

At the outset we should beware of a fallacy that inclines us to look for influences upon the early Christians which were foreign to our Lord's teaching, merely because there was some change in the form of their doctrine or in the terms in which they spoke of Him. The fallacy consists in supposing that the essence of Christianity lies in its doctrinal formulas. Christianity from the beginning and ever since has consisted in a reverence, a love, a hope, a spirit animating all conduct, which were at first and are

sometimes now compatible with very crude and insufficient ways of expressing why men care about Christ or what precisely that name signifies. This is not the less true because it became necessary for the Church to formulate its doctrine more precisely as time went on. It did become necessary, for the purpose of guarding, against vicious influences which tended to pervert and enfeeble it, a simple piety which had existed before any adequate definition of its principles could have been framed.

Whatever we may conceive our Lord's mission to have been, it was not primarily to proclaim some abstract theory about Himself. The original Church consisted of a little company of men who had lived with Him, loved Him, been taught and led by Him. When their attachment to Him had become complete, their hopes were suddenly shattered by an overwhelming calamity, and then — however we may conceive it to have happened — as suddenly restored by a conviction that He had risen and that He lived, though unseen, to be their Master for evermore. When they had to proclaim their conviction to the crowd and to the rulers of Jerusalem who had killed Him, they used, of course, the words that came readiest to them and that might appeal most directly to those whom they addressed. It belonged to the very nature of the case that these words were not the words in which their fullest reflection on His teaching and on His enduring significance to themselves and to the world would ultimately express itself. It is not in the abstract impossible that ideas about Him quite remote from His real teaching should have become implanted in their minds; but if they were governed by His influence alone, it would be equally inevitable that their thought, slowly ripening with the progress of their own mission, should set Him in a different light from that in which they saw

Him in the first days; inevitable, moreover, that words of His, unheeded because not understood when they were spoken, should in after times come to their remembrance, just as this Evangelist — surely not with cunning falsehood — says that our Lord foretold.

In considering any possible way in which the growth of their belief may have been affected, it should never be forgotten that these men believed all the while that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead. Critics who themselves do not believe in His resurrection often seem to forget that the Apostles did believe it. But the rapid spread, soon after His death, of a sincere and passionate conviction that He had risen is one of the most incontestable facts in history. We shall find, I think, that some prevalent theories about the origin of Christian doctrine owe their plausibility largely to the ignoring of this fact.

It will save a tiresome interruption of the argument later if something is here said about the reliance which we may place upon those books of the New Testament to which we must refer. Of course the earliest Christian documents which we possess in their original form are Epistles, not Gospels. St. Matthew and St. Luke are relatively later works, in which earlier-written material has passed under the revising hand of an editor — perhaps more than one such hand; nor need we question the current opinion that even St. Mark has been edited. Glosses on our Lord's words and sayings mistakenly referred to His authority might, it would seem, be often present in such books. Some such glosses can be pointed out with a fair amount of certainty; perhaps the clearest example is the qualification in St. Matthew of the prohibition of divorce given in St. Mark. It would be easy to point out a number of texts about which the conjecture

that they have crept in more or less in the same fashion is by no means unreasonable.

Now these facts certainly do impose one obligation on us in the use which, in a later chapter, must be made of the Fourth Gospel. That obligation is: to base our conclusions as little as possible upon any isolated saying of a sort that could reasonably be supposed not to be genuine, and to base them as much as possible upon the sustained tenor of whole passages and the combined authority of many diverse sayings. If later on I should appear to rest undue weight upon some single text, it will be to avoid prolixity and with the conviction that the same result could be reached with more obvious regard to this principle. Of course there are many striking single sayings of which no sensible critic has ever doubted the genuineness, because it is evident that they could never have been invented.

But it would be quite ridiculous to suppose, merely upon the ground just mentioned, that we need more than this very simple caution in referring to the Gospels for our Lord's teaching. We know that He was a great teacher, who gave His teaching often in a very easily remembered form; and it is quite impossible to suppose that the Church did not from very early days treasure the memory of His teaching. If we take a number of texts and say that any one of these may conceivably have been inserted in error, this would be a long way from implying that the whole number are likely to have been so inserted. Before we could say that, we should have to suppose some principle upon which such wholesale perversion of the record was carried on. There is a sort of loose, unthinking criticism which delights to reject passages of the Gospels arbitrarily. To that a very simple answer is enough. We must not talk as if the

whole record could be one huge interpolation into itself.

The destructive criticism of the Gospels that does claim some serious regard tries to distinguish a definite element in them which represents our Lord's real teaching, and an equally definite element which, owing to some tendency of early Christian thought, was grafted on to the original element. Attempts of this kind have been made by a great many scholars with immense industry and ingenuity, for many years gone by. It may seem a little rash to dispose in a few sentences of this mass of learned and earnest labor, and yet this can now be done. It would not be enough to say of the radical critics that their various conjectures are of the most conflicting kind, with no apparent tendency toward agreement among them, for many a sound process of discovery has passed through a similar stage; but we can go much beyond this. Roughly speaking, two opposite ways of breaking up the Gospels into authentic and unauthentic teaching have presented themselves, and the course of discussion upon them makes it now manifest that both are liable to the same fatal objection.

There are those who think our Lord was simply a teacher of pure ethical precepts and a lofty piety and did not concern Himself with what is called eschatology. All that we find in the Gospels about impending judgment, about His coming again, and the like, is — upon this view — derived from a stock of ideas which had much currency among the Jews, especially, it is sometimes said, in Galilee, and which the Apostles in their fervor blended with the thought of their risen Lord. I may say at once that there is in my belief a little truth underlying this view. The early Church did, as I conjecture, misunderstand certain sayings of His about things to

come, and our record of those sayings shows the marks of that misunderstanding. I shall return to this point later; but for the moment we are concerned only with a view which rejects altogether His reputed references to things to come. Certain scholars, on the contrary, think of Him as a fantastic visionary whose whole mind was full of an immediately impending end of the world and of the part which He was to play in it. Upon this view, though He is supposed to have laid down some rules of "interim" ethics, the permanent ethical value of the Gospel teaching is due to the reflections of His disciples after Him.

These two types of theory have been before the scholarly world in various forms long enough for a fact which any attentive and sympathetic reader might discover for himself to have become more than ever apparent. The ethical and the eschatological elements of the teaching in the Gospels are really inseparable. In passage after passage we find the characteristic moral teaching of the Gospels so blended with the thoughts of another world than this, and of things to come, and of our Lord's relation thereto, that, however difficult it may be to interpret these latter, they do manifestly form one single whole of thought with His simplest moral precepts. To separate the two a critic has to leave out of the Gospels what is in them and to read into them what is not, just as suits his own convenience, and far beyond any extent which common sense will allow him.

The reader need not at once take for granted so summary a statement of the case. But while there are several speculations of "advanced" criticism over which we shall have to spend some time, there is no very subversive theory dealing with this particular matter of the construction of the Synoptic Gospels over which we need

linger. If we find later that there does emerge from their general tenor a clear and consistent view of our Lord's teaching which sufficiently explains what the Apostles taught after Him, we may accept that view without suspicion.

Meanwhile, for the purpose of the present argument we are not to assume the Gospel according to St. John is an historical authority, except, of course, so far as it and the other Johannine books prove that when they were written certain tendencies of thought had arisen in the Christian Church. But in thus parting company with it for a time, we may note one point. It can no longer be thought safe to make the contrary assumption, that it is not an historical authority concerning our Lord. Much speculation about the origins of Christian doctrine goes on its way in disregard of this Gospel, as if one or another of the radical theories to account for it really did hold the field among reasonable critics who look into the matter. But this is very far from being the case.

I turn now to that Jewish religion in which Christianity had its roots. The whole problem before us is really to see more clearly how a teaching originally addressed to Jews in Jewish terms passed into a form in which it could appeal to the world.

XI

THE JEWISH BACKGROUND OF CHRISTIANITY

EVERY scholar should be well aware that Christianity was, in an important sense, no new religion at all. It was and it expressly claimed to be a development of Judaism. It is one of the two strongly contrasting forms in which Judaism now survives. Now Jewish religious thought did not, as we may be apt to think, stand still between the completion of the Old Testament and the advent of our Lord, though, outside the well-known Apocrypha, the literature from which we may infer its changes has not demanded general attention. The remnant of Israel that returned from Babylon stereotyped their worship and codified their laws. Having done this, as they believed, under God's guidance, they concluded before long that the Spirit of God had nothing further to say through the mouths of prophets. Finally, to the great advantage of the Christian Church, which kept in this respect to their tradition, those of them at least who lived in Palestine closed the canon of their authoritative books, and gave the Old Testament as we know it the position apart which — subject to the similar formation of a New Testament later — it has held ever since. The rigidly formulated system of observances which governed the Jews before Christ is, I suppose, repellent to most of us. To what was vital and best in it the prophets of the Old Testament and the spirit which in the main informs the

Old Testament had given such expression as we hardly desire to see, and certainly do not anywhere see, surpassed. Subject to a possible allowance for some favorite passages in the Apocrypha, the Jewish literature of later centuries is no more comparable with the Old Testament than certain of the Christian Fathers are with the New Testament. Nevertheless, in those dull centuries the warfare of the prophets may be said to have been achieving its best results. In their own days they had done battle, with uncertain issue, against the forces of surrounding idolatry, whose myths and rites evermore attracted the people of Israel, perhaps in proportion as the religion which was distinctively their own kept that beauty of freshness and spontaneity which now charms us. The victory which had now been won had manifest drawbacks, like other victories, but it was a victory. There existed as a fact and not merely as an ideal a community of men bound together by the closest of the ties which enter into nationality, who acknowledged themselves consecrated, each and all, to the serving of one God. He was an unseen God; He was righteous; He was the God of the whole earth and of the whole heavens, but He was their own God still, and He was a living God. His worship was clean. He claimed of them an allegiance such as no earthly monarch ever claimed, to be rendered not only by exact ceremonial but by every labor of the hand and every thought of the heart. Inside the hard shell of a formalism and exclusiveness so repugnant to us, an exalted and yet full-blooded monotheism was maturing the quality and gathering the strength with which thereafter it was to invade the world.[1]

[1] In the above paragraph I have repeatedly been echoing the magnificent conclusion of Wellhausen's *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels*. I hope I may claim also to have gained something in writing it from the circumstance that the day before doing so I finished reading Dr. Gore's *The Holy Spirit in the Church*.

One marked result of the development which then took place in current thought was that belief in the resurrection of the dead became general and strong, though the particular sect to which the chief priests belonged set itself against it. Whether at first it was to be only a resurrection of the just, or whether just and unjust were to arise and meet their different dooms, and whether or not immortality was thereafter to be the portion for weal or woe of both, in any case it was the resurrection of men and women, not of shades. That belief was the outcome of nothing else than a strengthened and purified belief in God and a strengthened and purified morality or sense of the individual man's or woman's relation to God. And it is beyond doubt that the age in which the scribes and Pharisees and the lawyers of the Gospel arose was productive of much real seeking after God and after the manner in which men may govern their lives aright. It gave birth not only to those now ill-reputed classes, but also to many plain people who ruled their lives less learnedly and methodically but probably on the average with simpler and purer hearts.

The rabbinical literature of legal interpretation and of commentary upon the Scriptures which now exists was chiefly written in days after our Lord's time and represents, adequately or not, that other form — contrasting with Christianity — in which Judaism has survived; but it enshrines the memory of much eager discussion which had been going on long before our Lord's time, preserving the good as well as the bad and the middling, and — a real note of grace and of intellectual life — preserving often the argument which was overborne as well as that which prevailed. Even if it were fair to think of it as largely a mountain of rubbish, materials drawn from it would illuminate and expand what we can

learn from the Gospels about Judaism in our Lord's time. And the Gospels bring before us not only the existence of the plain people already mentioned, who depended much upon the scribes, yet for good or evil were apt to be very different from them, but also two quite different sides to authoritative Judaism and to its class in authority. Formalism, absurdity, casuistry of the poisonous sort, and hypocrisy were evidently there in plenty. The ruling system had hardened into something which our Lord would seem to have regarded as definitely evil and which He made it part of His mission to shatter. Its leading men were people whom as a class — and as a class that could hit back — He hit hard. But it is easy to see that a great deal of His moral teaching was given not as a novelty but with a confident appeal to the prevailing conscience, and that His attitude to individual lawyers was not necessarily one of opposition. The scribe in St. Mark who meets the saying about the two great commandments with a hearty and apt response is "not far from the kingdom of God." St. Luke relates what was presumably the same incident, with a marked difference and with another context added. It does not matter here whether he is right in either respect; what is significant is that he was told and accepted anything like this; and his story gives us the right answer when we ask where lay the strength and the weakness of the average lawyer of the better sort. In St. Luke it is this lawyer, and not our Lord at all, who singles out from their contexts in Deuteronomy and Leviticus the two great commandments. On the other hand, he immediately gives way to the desire "to justify himself," and raises the misbegotten question, "Who is my neighbor?" When we look at Christianity as a code of simple moral precepts such as none but Jesus ever uttered, we are, in homely

phrase, taking hold of the wrong end of the stick. For the moment, however, the point is this: If it is suggested that an ordinary Jew of the time, who for any reason accepted Jesus as the Christ, might himself have supplied from a commonly available stock a considerable part of the ethics of Christianity, the answer is to many people by no means obvious.[1]

But controversy at the present time is far more occupied with another side of the development of Jewish thought. In approaching this we do well to lay to heart one feature which Jewish religion retained steadfastly and transmitted in an altered form to primitive Christianity. The relation of the individual soul to God might become the subject of more intense concern, but this in no way dulled the ardor of interest in the nation or community. The adjustment between a robust individualism and the claims of the State or of Society, which Greek philosophy ably thought out but which modern thought for a long while at least found hard, seems to effect itself easily, tacitly, and as if through instinct in the Old Testament, and in the New Testament certainly no less. Further: in normal Christian thought, love of the Christian brotherhood did not tend to stifle the wider sense of human fellowship but on the contrary invigorated it much; and while nothing nearly so strong as this could be said of ancient Judaism, — indeed, far from it, — yet neither in the Old Testament nor in the thought of later centuries was a similar association of ideas quite shut out. "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." And this forms no small part of the heritage which the thought of our days derives

[1] Mr. C. G. Montefiore's *Liberal Judaism* and Dr. I. Abrahams' *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels* (in two parts; Cambridge University Press) are books which I should like to call to the attention of some readers who may not know them; and I forbear my one adverse comment upon them.

from the Jewish religion. The conception of the whole world as having a history behind it and a future before it runs through the Bible; and in Jewish thought the growing sense of a world to come — or of an order of being not to be grasped by present human perceptions — never made what exists and happens on this earth seem either illusory or uninteresting. The course of this world, moreover, never seemed a mere tangle, or a mere decline or decay, or a drearily unending recurrence of the same successive phases, such as presented itself sometimes to Plato. For the Jew it postulated a great lapse at an early stage, but it was still the fulfillment of a great plan, a progress leading, through however many vicissitudes, to some sort of consummation. In this whole progress Israel had its part; and strangely exclusive and repellent to others as the Jews notoriously were, there is a sense in which the most parochial or the most atrociously jingo Jew aimed at ends which he could more or less regard as those of mankind and of the world.

With this we may turn to certain expectations, closely related together, which were vividly if vaguely present to Jewish thought when Jesus Christ was born. The New Testament proves to us that Jews then very generally looked for — soon or late — some sort of redemption or deliverance of Israel; the coming of a Kingdom of God, which would be a reign of righteousness and might also be regarded as the restoration of a Kingdom of Israel; a righting of the relations between the Jews and other peoples, especially their oppressors; behind these things the end of the world, and the coming, connected with all these transactions, of a great personage commonly called the Messiah. Turning back to the Old Testament, we find abundant texts which Jews and Christians afterward took as authority for these ideas, sometimes with

more reason and sometimes with less. And we see throughout (playing of course a more prominent part than the thought of the world's history and coming more closely home to the Jews) the conviction that God had made a promise to Israel; that the apparent breach of this promise, in the succession of afflictions through which Israel had passed and might pass, was in all cases chastisement made necessary by Israel's sins; and that, undefeated by those sins, God would at last make good that promise in some tremendous consummation, upon which, though with increasing perplexity, longing eyes were increasingly set.

We are to notice how, during the interval between the periods of the Old and of the New Testament, the group of ideas in question became in a very natural way the subject of more bewildered speculation, and yet in a very wonderful way the subject of more daring hope. All these ideas had of course that vagueness and fluidity which belong even to the most reasonable and useful anticipations of the far future, and belong too, in some measure, to the theories which underlie the existing constitution of any nation.

We can best clear up some of the obscurities of this subject by beginning with the idea of the Messiah, which retains, beyond all the rest, an emotional interest for ourselves. It is evident that in our Lord's days the expectation of him "that is to come," if not always active, was always there to be aroused. It is also evident that "he that is to come" was spoken of as the "Messiah" both in popular language and in the discussions of the learned and orthodox. "Messiah" means the "anointed," or in Greek, "christos"; and in this connection it almost certainly suggested first an anointed king. David called Saul "the Lord's anointed" and he

became himself an anointed person referred to in many texts. Normally the expected Messiah was a prince of the house of David, but a famous question of our Lord's to the scribes shows that the views about this were not fixed. As a matter of fact, the first of three historic persons who were hailed as the Messiah was a prince of the house of Levi, the least desirable of the Maccabees. The expectation of a "son of David" would have been highly unacceptable under him. The last of the three was Bar Cochba, the leader of the final ill-fated uprising of the Jews in A.D. 132.

But priests were anointed and prophets had been anointed, and the Messiah might be conceived of as priest or prophet or successor of the ancient judges of Israel rather than as king. His one constant character seems to have been that he was to appear on earth, presumably of human birth, as God's vicegerent and the organ of His righteousness. In some forecasts of the future in which he was named he might appear an otiose figure, the execution of God's judgment being ascribed to God direct. But this may signify little, for the deeds actually believed to have been done by cherished figures in history are often spoken of in the Bible as done by the direct agency of God, and the tendency to speak thus must have been far stronger when the hero in question was not a figure of history or even legend, but a future person, of whom there was really little to be said. Indeed, the presence in such cases of this vague being shows the strength, not the weakness, of the inclination to link the great coming events with the coming of a person. Again, the conception of such a person, to come on earth as the last and supreme exponent of God's justice, might be present without any use of the particular title, "Messiah." And there were no doubt forecasts of ultimate

events in which neither the name nor any comparable figure was to be found at all; I shall have later to mention a visionary writing in which a prominent place is given to one who might be thought to express a radically altered conception of the Messiah, but who is perhaps more likely just a cloudy shape of literary dream. Though the dreams of different dreamers took different shapes and common men of different character might attribute different characters to the Messiah, it is a certain and remarkable fact that his coming was by no means unexpected when Jesus of Nazareth came.

Here we must look back to the ideas in the Old Testament from which this Messianic thought was descended. The Old Testament abounds in passages which Christian divines from the Apostles downward have interpreted as prophetic of the Messiah and believed to have been fulfilled in our Lord. We are not concerned for the moment as to whether they really were fulfilled in our Lord, but we are concerned as to whether, generally speaking, they had anything to do with the Messiah. It is now often said of many such passages that they had nothing to do with him, and this is argued in some cases with good reason — in others, as I think, absurdly. We clearly need not consider here such texts as "a bone of him shall not be broken," in which, whatever else might be said about them, the Messianic idea could not be said to be expressed. These are merely examples of how the Jews loved to use symbolism and sometimes found symbolism in what had not been so intended. There are also instances of poetic figures once taken to be the Messiah, which are now generally thought to stand in some cases for God, or in other cases for the people of Israel. The correction in these instances is generally one which I should accept; though it is sometimes quite

another question whether the poet himself (with all the associations which he really had in mind) would have thought the correction worth making. The mind of Hebrew poets seems sometimes to have passed easily from one to another of the ideas: a nation, the ancestor of that nation, its actual king, an expected king, an ideal, typical king or representative of the nation — in an unconscious way which we do not easily follow.

It is quite unnecessary that we should examine all the supposed Messianic references; there is, however, a considerable class of texts, especially in the Psalms, which claim full attention, but on which certain broad considerations are obvious. As an example I take the words, "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." Whom, in this instance, did the writer mean by "my Lord," who was to sit at God's right hand, and whose enemies were to be his footstool? The first part of the prediction might give us pause till we learn, as we easily may, that Jews and early Christians no more thought of God as a being who had literally a right hand than Longfellow did when he made some savage in *Hiawatha* "touch God's right hand in the darkness." Recognizing that this vehement phrase might merely be a very ample expression of the honor for which God had singled out the person addressed, most of us, I think, would now suppose that "my Lord" was, according to the date of the Psalm, either David or some reigning successor of his or some expected successor, of whom the poet demanded a practical triumph over the heathen neighbors of his people. Assuming this as I do, and assuming the like, as I am prepared to do, in every like instance, I now ask myself a question which, frankly, I did not ask when, years ago,

I first became aware that scholars interpreted Scripture in such ways: What is the change which this should make in my understanding of the Bible, if I had originally thought that the poet meant by "my Lord" Jesus Christ, pretty clearly preconceived? At some period I probably did think so. And the answer is in outline very plain. The Psalmist in question was not, I believe, expressing just that Messianic hope which was to grow up in after generations of his people, still less that precise form of Messianic hope which our grandfathers imputed to him very literally, and which the Apostles too imputed to him, though — as scholarship suggests — not quite so literally. He was expressing a hope which reasonable and practical neighbors of his, if they had courage and backbone, might set their hearts upon and expect to see substantially fulfilled. He may have lived to see his immediate hope partly fulfilled for a time, or to see it woefully disappointed, or to see strange alternations of these two results; that depends on his precise date. But in any case the hope lived on among his people, with some startling momentary fulfillments that had their lasting consequences, and with disappointment thickening and deepening to a point at which, when we read of it, we cannot but think that we should have quite despaired. And the hope lived on, changing, as the outlook darkened, into a form which was more glorious and was held with a more amazing tenacity. When the Apostles, sincerely believing in Jesus Christ, quoted the Psalmist as having spoken prophetically of Him, their historical error — if any — was much like that of the many Englishmen who have traced all their liberties to Magna Carta. In a sense which a child can understand, the hope of the Messiah, in the highest form which it could ever take, was directly descended

from the earliest Psalmist's hope of a worthy successor to the throne of David.

If we tried to trace the development of the idea of the Messiah down to our Lord's time, we should be likely to find not only interruption but retrogression. As has been said, it occurs only in connection with the more general idea of a revival of Israel and an ultimate fulfillment of God's purposes, and, if hope of these things was to remain at all, current thought about them was bound to become in some ways less shallow and more capable of rising to an elevated conception of the Messiah when that was presented to it. Nevertheless, so far as the figure of the Messiah is concerned, the deepest visions which ever came to individuals in days before our Lord are to be found in prophets from (say) a century and a half before the Captivity in Babylon to a short time after it ended. And the Apostles, we know, looked to these prophets for light upon our Lord's being, and not, so far as we know, to speculations of a date nearer their own time. Thus it will be worth while here to take full stock of the character of the prophecies to which they looked back.

In the case of one of the earlier of these prophets we know enough of the chief events that happened in his time to be able to read his vision of things far distant in connection with his views of practical politics. The first thirty-nine chapters of the book of Isaiah can safely be ascribed, with the omission of several quite distinct insertions, to the actual Isaiah, the son of Amos, whose active life covered the time when the kingdom of Israel perished and ended, about 700 B.C., while the sorely threatened kingdom of Judah had still more than a century to survive.[1] His earliest visions came toward

[1] The chief passage to be omitted, and to be referred to some much later date is Isaiah xxiv to xxvi. Also Chapters xxxviii and xxxix seem to belong before Chapters

the close of a prosperous time in the history of Judah, and were messages of religious, moral, and social reform, backed by an awful sense that this prosperous people, supposed to be God's people, were piling up God's vengeance against themselves. The religious evil of the time was not that people forsook their God for the gods of the heathen, but that they did not truly regard Him as a righteous God. A tremendous peril was approaching, from which God only could save them; and He would not save them, because they did not serve Him. Popular solemnities and ceremonies were not His true service; they only blinded the conscience of all classes to the fact that the land reeked with luxury, avarice, oppression, and graft. Soon it appears that the peril which Isaiah foresees — years before the enslavement of Northern Israel and more than a century before the taking of Jerusalem — is the imperial power of Assyria. Others, thinking of the same danger, place great hope upon confederation with neighboring powers or combinations of powers, greater or less: Egypt, Moab, Northern Israel, Syria. Next Syria and Northern Israel invade Judah, to force it to enter their combination, and the Jews are in great fear. Isaiah had derided their hopes of help through Egyptian protection or help from a confederacy — those would not stand against Assyria. He now derided their fears — Jerusalem would stand against Rezin and Pekah. And he was right. Years

xxxvi and xxxvii, for Merodach-Baladan's attempt to erect a kingdom of Babylon came long before the unsuccessful expedition which Sennacherib sent against Jerusalem. A good explanation can apparently be found as to why an editor three hundred years later thus misarranged the text. The book when reconstructed in this, which seems a safe way, has a much more impressive close. Verse 38 of Chapter xxxvii may also be the editor's insertion, for Sennacherib died some time after this disaster, when Isaiah, if alive, would have been about ninety. As to this book of the original Isaiah, or indeed about the prophets generally, I do not know that anything better can be read than Matthew Arnold's "Isaiah of Jerusalem," written when the Revised Version of the Old Testament was in prospect.

later, the army of Sennacherib came up against Jerusalem, and Isaiah, who was at least seventy and had for years proclaimed the vast strength of Assyria, now stiffened the back of Hezekiah to resist. However the event came about, that event, as we all know, justified him. Perhaps we may say at once that the great poet saw the trend of events with the clear, unillusioned, dauntless eye of a great statesman. But if we think the old man's contempt for the threats of Rabshakeh ("The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee and laughed thee to scorn") strange after all that he had once said about the irresistible might of Assyria, the answer lies on the surface of his story. He would have nothing to do with coalitions which would really have hastened the Assyrian conquest and which in the meantime would have compromised the independence of Judah. That independence was a thing to be defended at all hazards, because, beyond all other reasons, this petty state, however corrupted, was still the nucleus of the kingdom of God.

And here we pass from his vision of things within the scope of reasoned foresight to his vision of what in fact lay very far away: "Nevertheless, the dimness shall not be such —" "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse." When believers in Jesus Christ have said that the prophet's dream was true, have they been reading him right? Hopes and fears must have been differently blended in him at different times, and so complete consistency is perhaps not to be sought in his prophecies. As a poet, he might claim that he had something to say which was independent of the literal accuracy of his statements. Also some doubtful questions of scholarship may arise here. But we may assume that, at one time at least, he did definitely, as Matthew

Arnold says, "put his Immanuel too soon by seven centuries." Another of the greatest prophets, Micah, had a similarly premature hope about the same time. Perhaps we may assume that a literal despoiling of the Philistines and of Edom, Moab, and Ammon by a restored and reunited Israel, under a prince of the throne of David, entered into his visions. But, recognizing fully his kinship with earlier seers whose thoughts were not at all concerned with any Prince of Peace, we must equally recognize other features of his prophecy which are quite as strongly marked. These show alike Isaiah's hold on realities and the far range of his sane poetical inspiration.[1]

To begin with, Isaiah is entirely in earnest with his preaching that God is a God of righteousness in the largest sense; that the only service of Him is by righteousness; that His favor for His chosen people is conditional on their learning to do right. Now that we have happily lost any notion that all manner of heathen are in all ways wicked, we may be apt to forget that this is a remarkable thing; but to think godliness and goodness the same was an idea that did not come naturally to those estimable men, our own and other people's rude forefathers. To the men who first thought it clearly and said it loud the heartfelt conversion to it of a country, king and all, cannot have seemed quite impossible. And if they judged further that a people who were in some real degree so converted would become possessed of an astonishing power, common sense and the partial examples

[1] In choosing this phrase I am not assuming that there is no distinction between the sense in which the prophets (who were also of course poets) were inspired and the sense in which, as Mr. A. C. Bradley would tell us, some at least of our poets have been inspired. For all that I know there may be a very substantial distinction. But there are points of identity. And one of these is that both these characters are generally akin not to the lunatic but to the exceptionally level-headed man. The few facts known about him are enough to prove that Isaiah, like Wordsworth, was a man with an unusually steady head in times of peril.

and analogies which history gives us show that this was reasonable on their part. Isaiah's prevailing tone, in this respect, was certainly not what we should call sanguine; the true comment upon him would rather be that he

> . . . . . did not shrink from hope
> In the worst moment of those evil days;
> From hope, the paramount *duty* that Heaven lays
> For its own honor on man's suffering heart.[1]

He knew that the people of Judah would revolt more and more, and accordingly foreboded calamity upon calamity for them. But a "remnant" would escape from the ruin, a very small remnant. It would be like the stump of a tree cut down and burned. Only the sap of life would still be in that stump, yet after all there would come a startling growth from it — as did happen.

Here it is worth noting that his unpopular warnings of the full strength of Assyria were free from the least tendency, such as writers on such a theme have often shown, to idealize the Assyrian. He might have said: —

> Never may from our souls one truth depart,
> That an *accursed* thing it is to gaze
> On prosperous tyrants with a dazzled eye.[1]

The great power, which he does not minimize, is a brutal power, and God may use it as the instrument of His anger, but will break it in good time. Yet for the surrounding nations, and not only for that chosen to be the first depository of his truth, God has a purpose beyond vengeance, a merciful purpose, of which the chosen nation is to be the instrument for them. At one moment Isaiah's vision of what is to come upon the restoration of Judah may

[1] The italics are Wordsworth's own.

seem to be limited to the restoration of a remnant of Northern Israel as well, to peace and reunion of the two, and to their jointly prevailing over their enemies. But elsewhere he has a larger vision, and one which cannot be regarded as at all a wild dream of what might be about to happen fairly soon. A purified Judah (Northern Israel is not here mentioned) is to remain as a small independent state between Egypt and the Assyrian empire, and it is to be the centre from which the knowledge of God will spread to and will regenerate both. More generally his vision is wider still, and while less definite has in some sense and in some part been actually fulfilled. Zion is the possessor of a light which will one day so burn that all the Gentile nations will come to it. It is with this largest hope, one which definitely embraces all mankind, that Isaiah links his expectation of the true heir of David, the son of Jesse. If he is conceived at all as a victorious soldier who, as it were, "with the breath of his mouth shall slay the wicked," he is still more the righteous judge, the upholder of the humble, the source of saving knowledge. He shall "reprove with equity for the meek of the earth . . . and the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea . . . and his name shall be called . . . the Prince of Peace."

All this is prose analysis of what is set down very plainly in Isaiah; and there is no such adequate comment upon his vision as the music of Händel's mighty chorus. When men long after — Händel, for example — saw the vision fulfilled in Jesus Christ (this is not the point at which to ask whether they misjudged Jesus Christ), they certainly did not misinterpret Isaiah.

It is not at all necessary here to notice all the prophecies which can properly be understood as Messianic; but

I shall refer here to one later prophet, because his influence on the Apostles appears in the Acts to have been marked, and it is often said that they mistook his meaning. The follower of Isaiah whose writings were afterward incorporated with his appears to have prophesied shortly before the return from the Captivity, say about 540 B.C. He had nothing expressly to say of the house of David or stem of Jesse. The Lord's anointed was for him Cyrus, and he does not seem to have expected a restoration of David's line in the person of Zerubbabel; rather perhaps he may have expected what did come to pass, an attempt to revert to the earlier (perhaps legendary) theocracy, only with a priestly caste in place of its judges and prophets. It accords too with the situation of the remnant that was to return that there was no thought here of victorious wars on their part. But the distinctive hopes of the original Isaiah have by no means disappeared. A reign of God's righteousness, spreading its sway over the Gentiles, prevailing over much iniquity in Jerusalem too, yet centring in Jerusalem, is the great theme of this book; according to the interpretation which the Apostles and many people before and after them have put upon certain chapters of it, the exalted being who was to have been God's organ in the older prophecy reappears. He no longer has his hereditary rank and his instant claim upon the Jewish allegiance, but his greater attributes have been developed. He is not only to "reprove with equity for the meek of the earth"; he is to come as emphatically one of them, the very pattern (as we may say) of the meekness that has a worthy cause, and it is after and through meekness and suffering that he will be exalted high. I am of course aware that the marvelous image of "my righteous servant" is often said to stand for no individual but for

the people of Israel corporately. So the servant does in some places, for example in Chapter xliv, where he is "Jacob, my servant," and in passages where he is not at all righteous; and a Western reader might expect him to do so throughout. But, when, in Chapter xlix, it is the servant's function to bring Jacob again to God, or "to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel," clearly he does so no more. Has he again become the whole people in Chapter liii? Upon that supposition no good sense can be made of what the prophet says. It would surely be ridiculous, for example, to interpret him as saying that the Jewish people corporately had "poured out their soul unto death" with a set purpose of expiating the sins of the Gentiles; and it would not be less ridiculous if, like some commentators, we made the prophet put these remarks into the mouths of Gentile kings. And there I might leave this marvelous and most individual image,[1] but the triumphant

[1] If we understand the prophet (a Jew) to be speaking to the Jews in his own person, and at the same time take the "servant" to be the Jews corporately, the whole chapter reads into nonsense, thus: "You Jews will one day see yourselves as a people, when it will strike you that you are an ugly race. You will then go on to remark that, not having deserved any punishment, you have been severely punished, and by this vicarious suffering on your own behalf, have escaped being punished at all, while all the time richly deserving punishment."

This nonsense is quite avoided if the "servant" is taken to be an individual great leader of the Jews; but that idea was "to the Jews a stumbling-block." The oldest known rabbinical commentary before Christ recognizes clearly that the natural interpretation is to take the afflicted "servant" as an individual raised up by God, but casts about for some explanation which will avoid this shocking idea. Later rabbis, apparently in Christian times, found a way out by putting the whole of Chapter liii into the mouths of a chorus of Gentile kings — mentioned at the end of lii — and interpreting the "servant" as meaning the Jews as a nation. The idea of the Jews as an innocent people, vicariously and of their own free will suffering for the sins of all the Gentile nations, commended itself to them and does so to some modern commentators. But besides being in itself ridiculous, it is quite contrary to what all previous prophets — and in particular the actual Isaiah — had said of the Jews; and it is not, I think, lessened by putting it into the mouths of the Gentile kings.

If the prophet means by the "servant" an individual, it makes no difference whether he puts Chapter liii into the mouths of these kings or speaks in his own person. His meaning is an advance upon what Isaiah had said, but along the same line. In any case, the Apostles understood him in the same sense in which I do.

chapters with which the prophet closes demand a few words. Whether he "that cometh from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah" be this same servant who had been wounded and bruised, or whether, as is likely enough, it is God Himself whose own arm is here seen prevailing, or whether, as also seems to me quite likely, the poet is not to be pinned to either of these as a necessary interpretation, I will not discuss. But here the militant spirit of the old Isaiah may seem to be revived in full force, and indeed with a zest for carnage which is unlike that stern seer who had dealt manfully with actual war, and accordingly wished every warrior's panoply and trophies to be burned. Really this later vision is no more concerned with any literal encounter of armed forces than is Heber's great hymn, "The Son of God goes forth to war"; and the prophet contemplates God's ultimate triumph over all forces of opposing ill in far greater detachment from any great political drama, beginning to be acted under his eyes, than was possible to his predecessor. He is looking forward solely to a catastrophe more cosmic, more ultimate, and more wrapped in mystery than the downfall (or possible conversion) of Assyria. In this respect those who shortly before our Lord sought to interpret or amplify prophecy were in some degree like him. But they were far gone not only in mystery but in depression and gloom. Gloom is not absent from this prophet's pages; they reiterate the threat of vengeance on those who to the end are hardened against God's righteousness; and indeed the book closes with words which, especially as quoted in the New Testament, have perhaps made more people shudder than any other words of any book. Yet what the prophet has carried forward from the war poetry of the old Israel is not so much any lust of retribution to enemies

as the full-grown vitality of manhood, exultant and exuberant, subtly woven into the fabric of his tale of a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And this too is part of the legacy which young Christianity accepted from him.

What remains to be said of the recurrent image of the Messiah can be said more briefly. As has been said, it was obviously one that might or might not arise in the forecasts of the future, on which men of different opinions and different temper ventured under different circumstances, but to which Jewish thought was most exceptionally prone. But the hierarchy which in the last-mentioned prophet's time came to possess all that could be restored of David's sovereignty elaborated and codified its partly ancient laws. And when it did so it incorporated with them or added to them collections and recensions of the national legend and history, the most sacred of its poetry, and the prophetic writings from the first down to the latest which it recognized as inspired. Thereby it enshrined the tradition of the earliest heroes and of the promise to them, and in particular the tradition and the hope of David, in the central chambers of its whole edifice. The regular religious teachers of the people thereafter necessarily conned and pondered and expounded many a text to which they were forced to give a Messianic significance, since they were bound not to treat them as either mere antiquity or mere fairy story. A time came when the actual priestly government had long ceased to play any very glorious part in patriotic eyes, and when too it belonged to a sect whose piety at its best had been opposed to the loftier and to the more popular trend of religious thought. This in itself, we must suppose, would give a fresh attractiveness to hopes, whatever fantastic and conflicting forms

they might take, of David's rightful heir. And though the requirement of heirship to that king could be interpreted elastically or, if necessary, explained away, there was always in human nature the not ill-founded expectation that a great event will be the work of a great man. If the promised kingdom meant a successful armed national uprising, clearly it must imply a great captain. If it meant rather, what was in many quiet minds primary, the reconciliation of the people's hearts to their righteous God, then a Moses or an Elijah or one like them but greater might well seem needed. There must, I venture to think, have been two strains of thought which would constantly lead men to cherish the promise of the Messiah, though in very different ways. The fierce insurgent feelings of a patriotism which never slept would turn to that promise and read it in its own way. The deeper piety which we know was there, undemonstratively seeking after God, must no less certainly have dwelt often upon such a vision as that of God's righteous servant. The insurgent view of the Messiah was that which would appeal to popular sentiment with immediate dynamic force. The contrasting view was one to which the serious thought of countless plain people would in sober moments yield a deep response. In this simple consideration we shall later see the key to some of the most remarkable features in the Gospel narrative.

As has been said, the essential character of the Messiah was that of a vicegerent of God, representing Him on earth in what was to be at once His kingdom and in some sense that of His chosen people. And while the Messianic conception is a subject which has raised these somewhat complex considerations, the wider conceptions in which it was an element underwent a development of

which the broad features are plain enough. Enough evidence on this matter is given by a body of literature, more or less popular at the Christian era, to which scholars have paid great attention of late. It consists for the most part of writings which purported to be the work of great men long gone by, from Ezra back to Enoch. They bore fictitious names because this was the readiest way in which the speculations of their authors on great subjects could engage attention, in an age when prophetic inspiration could not be claimed for them. Those of them which mainly concern us were "apocalypses"; that is, they purported to be revelations of a coming climax to the history of the Jews, the world, and the universe; there were also psalms belonging to the same period and expressing the like idea. Those which survive are attributed to dates ranging from shortly before the Maccabees, say before 170 B.C., to 100 or more A.D.; and besides the great Apocalypse or Revelation of St. John there were doubtless Christian apocalypses and also half-Christian apocalypses. One of them is the book commonly called II Esdras, which is included in our Apocrypha, that well-known collection of books deemed venerable but not authoritative in Jerusalem, but ranked with the Old Testament by Jews in Alexandria. Of these apocalypses II Esdras has been said to be the most touching and beautiful. I need not here attempt to estimate the quality of these apocalypses or the degree of vogue or influence which they are likely to have obtained. They plainly offered a vent to the ideas of people outside the circle of recognized and orthodox teachers; they were an attractive vehicle for bold speculations of a kind, would supply some natural demands of popular taste, and are said to have enjoyed special favor in Galilee. In any case the light which they throw upon some

aspects of living religious thought in our Lord's day is plain.

It had long been growing dismally clear that no such deliverance as had been wrought by Gideon against the Midianites or David against the Philistines was going to be lastingly achieved against the succession of mighty empires which Judah had since known as neighbors and frequent oppressors. Yet God's promise endured, and men whose knowledge of the world would have kept them from following some new professed champion of their country's cause reasoned that the deliverance would one day be wrought by God's arm alone in some manner past ordinary comprehension. Following up this thought, they might please themselves with any kind of fancy as to the havoc which would be made of their enemies by Him who wielded the lightning and the earthquake; or they might be led along the tracks of thought through which men conceive of a future world quite different from this, or of an underlying reality which sense dimly, if at all, reveals. And these different orders of ideas might be blended. At the same time another process of thought, not arising from any despair of this world, had spread and strengthened the belief in immortality. Thus men who dwelt much on supernatural future happenings told of a reign of God forever on earth, or of the end of earth and heaven and the making of all things new, or of the earthly reign as temporary and leading to the greater consummation. In any event a reward was coming to the righteous, but that reward might be thought of grossly and absurdly or in a spiritually minded fashion. The requital of the unrighteous was a further and to some minds alluring subject of speculation. And then, who were the righteous, for whom bliss was in store somewhere? And who were the un-

righteous, over whom dreadful judgments impended? The former were never thought to include all Jews, and the latter could seldom or never be thought to include all Gentiles; yet it remained unquestionable that the Jews were God's chosen people and might in a general way be considered His faithful people, while in a general way all heathen were His enemies. Here then was a problem with which many would be sorely puzzled, while some were content to hope for a general subjugation of the Gentiles, and some few (or not so few) hoped for their ultimate conversion.

I have already spoken of various aspects in which the Messiah might be introduced in these connections. It should be added that the copious lore about angels and fallen angels which seems to have had its origin during the Babylonian captivity was worked out by writers of apocalypses as well as by the rabbinical expositors of Scripture. Nor does this list exhaust the number of points on which simple or speculative minds might ask questions, but on which the Scriptures gave them uncertain answers or none at all. I am not suggesting that there had come to exist among the Jews any thought-out and systematic solution of any of the problems here spoken of. Probably strong minds were able to face the fact that these issues were mysterious. But apocalyptic literature proves, if proof be needed, that curiosity upon such matters was rife; and it presents us with a rich variety of attempts made with more or less seriousness to satisfy that curiosity. It may be taken as certain that our Lord and the Apostles were familiar with the general trend of such speculations. Some scholars have suggested that the doctrines of Christianity were influenced by ideas taken from apocalyptic literature in an important respect which we shall have to consider later.

In taking account of the influence of such speculations we must of course observe how nearly related most of their topics were to the very springs of Jewish patriotism. Nevertheless we should remember that this can never have been the workaday side of religion. In this respect what St. Paul would have called the spiritual mind and the commonest wisdom of the world were at one; then, as now, both demanded direction in the ordinary conduct of life; and both sought it then in the precepts of the Old Testament, though they might use them very differently. Brought up on the Law and the Prophets, some found self-contentment in the minute observance of petty rules; some hungered and thirsted after a righteousness on the whole more largely conceived than it can then have been elsewhere in the world. These were the religious influences of primary importance; but roving imaginations about the future played their part. There was much in them which sincerely pious if not powerful minds would prize highly. Speculations which in themselves are worth little may often excite deeper thoughts in those who are touched by them.

The New Testament story begins with men who lived in a world of thought, some of whose features I have tried to mark in this chapter. Before its close their world of thought had been transformed into one which we should all hesitate to analyze, but with which we are all in a way familiar, and which has lost for us its special associations with Judæa. Criticism of the New Testament is the study of that transformation.

Was what happened a sudden regrouping of elements long present together, such as an ordinary sincere moralist or even an ordinary fanatic might have caused unwittingly if he intervened when, so to speak, the temperature and atmospheric conditions happened to be

favorable? Or did it come to pass under the conscious hand of one in whom we recognize great genius, and in whom, having once clearly recognized that, we may perhaps be forced to see much more?

XII

THE GENTILE ENVIRONMENT OF THE FIRST CHRISTIANS

I SHALL now recall some well-known features of that larger world amid which the Jewish community kept itself to a remarkable degree isolated, and give more fully some account of religions then prevailing in that world, of which readers who are not special students may be expected to know very little.

The part of the world which we must consider lay wholly within the Roman Empire and chiefly within that Eastern part of the Empire in which the Greek language prevailed, for it does not concern us here that Christianity spread beyond the Eastern boundaries of the Empire to an extent of which we know little. We are to think of a time before any distinctively Western influence upon Christian thought can have been appreciable. Utterly foreign to us as were some of the religious movements which we shall have to notice, the world in which they and Christianity after them were spreading was in some respects already that civilized world in which we now live.

Just when the dominions of Rome were reaching what, with trifling exceptions, may be called their final limits, there arose in Rome itself a form of government which was at least capable of bearing imperial responsibilities.

The establishment of the Empire was a happy thing, felt to be so — one might say — almost everywhere except in Jerusalem and in Rome. It meant enduring peace, good order, secure communications (with all the help that they gave to commerce), and a system of administration which was in some places conspicuously just, and which tended to become so everywhere. These furnished outward conditions which might favor any kind of human progress; and moreover, the fact of an Empire capable of such results was in itself what we must call a spiritual influence. Vergil has left us in the *Æneid* the great memorial of how that Empire might be regarded by some of those who assisted at its rise, familiar though we are with the ugly sides of the story. It may surprise us more that provincials, especially in the East, were disposed to look at it in the same light as Vergil. There are signs, of course, that St. Paul and St. Luke did so. One great mark of the prevailing view of the Empire was the readiness of many Easterners to pay to the reigning Emperor divine honors — hard as it is for us to grasp exactly what those honors meant. The Empire brought with it a livelier conception than had ever before prevailed of one inhabited world, of one human race inhabiting it, and of a general welfare of that race. It put fresh life into that Hellenistic civilization which had been spread over the regions in which we are here especially interested, about three hundred years before.

It had been the conscious ambition of that — in many respects — very undesirable savage, Alexander, and of his successors, to spread over the East all that they themselves appreciated in the civilization of those Greek city-states whose independent and internecine vitality they themselves were so powerfully helping to extinguish. These potentates were great founders or restorers of cities,

which they adorned not merely with their own palaces but with all the places of public resort, baths, theatres, gymnasia, and the like, which were to be found (say) in Athens. Greek municipal institutions, clubs, and social organizations were founded. Greek art, Greek athletics, Greek drama, Greek schools, Greek lecturers, philosophers, rhetoricians, and artists found new homes. The Greek language became the language of government, commerce, learning, and fashion over a large space of the earth, and therewith came, of course, widespread acquaintance with a great literature. The immense force of this movement was doubtless due to the fact that large numbers of the most vigorous and enterprising Greeks themselves migrated in the wake of the Macedonian conquerors, or had served in their armies and settled in the new or revived centres of population and trade. Of course, among the multitudes who in St. Paul's time spoke Greek the portion of Greek blood present was very small, and that of Greek genius smaller. The life of that age which is now spoken of as Hellenistic is not inspiring to us to think of — far less attractive, not merely than that of the old Greeks but than that of many a relatively barbarous people. Yet it was marked off from what we call barbarism, and no doubt relatively at least from the life of Judaism, by a large measure of those gifts which the Renaissance long after derived from Greek influences and brought to modern Europe. Even its decadent theatre gave a wider range to human sympathy. Its art and its far too professional athletics caused a keener interest in the possibilities of human performance. In short, "humanism," meaning an enlarged sense of the capacities of human nature for enjoyment and for achievement, was widely spread. And so certainly was rationalism, or the sense that things have their reasons which it is a good thing to explore and to

discuss. This, as will be pointed out in a moment, did not go very deep; but it was there to be some day used. The amazing success that could be achieved by emigrant or wandering orators and philosophers proves that keen and varied intellectual interests of some sort were widely diffused.

We learn that early Christian converts seldom belonged to the upper circles of Hellenistic life, but such influences as theirs spread wide. Exceptional intellectual activity is more freely and surprisingly scattered about than upper circles have commonly been aware. The congregations to whom St. Paul thought it worth while to write his Epistles were not people of stunted intelligence.

The great days of Greek philosophy were long over. What it had come to mean during three generations of extraordinary men at Athens was the sustained and methodical attempt of a number of picked men, the flower of a highly trained race, working in coöperation, to organize all available knowledge, to extend its bounds daringly in every hopeful direction, and to apply it to the service of well-ordered States and to the strengthening and purifying of the individual souls most capable of it. Such a design could be entertained only during the short period when a peculiarly intense civic and social life was at its highest in an unusually gifted race. In the restricted sense now often given to the word, that of the patient attempt to clear up the fundamental ideas of all human thought and knowledge, "philososphy" died out with Aristotle, Plato's only important successor; and in this respect their work was to remain scarcely understood for over two thousand years. Even that passionate interest in truth as such which had distinguished these men ceased to be what, according to Plato, Socrates had

declared it should be, the prominent characteristic of all who aspired to be philosophers.

The greatest movement to which the name of philosophy was attached in the last three centuries B.C. was Stoicism. The Stoic School was started in actual revolt against the tendency of philosophy to idle speculation, and its whole effort was concentrated on the regulation of life in accordance with reason. With this earnest — and sometimes slightly narrow — absorption in the practical application of a rule of life, the Stoics took the rule itself somewhat uncritically, and picked up a philosophic or religious doctrine which seemed sufficient to support it without any such vigorous and independent effort directed to first principles as would make that side of this great movement demand special remark now. None the less it directed, during centuries, many strong minds and wills to practical problems of righteousness, and materialistic as its doctrine of the universe may be called, could evoke a high strain of piety in such simple souls as the boxer Cleanthes, whose great hymn is possibly alluded to in St. Paul's reference to "certain of your own poets." The scarcely less famous Cynics were not so much a school as a host of vehement odd persons who made war on the mere conventions, on the luxuries, and occasionally on the decencies of ordinary life. Cynicism might take a disreputable form, idle and conceitedly eccentric under its ruggedness, or it might produce preachers ready to testify at all risks on behalf of some right and enlightened cause. In contrast with the Stoics, with their principle of duty, stood the Epicureans, whose professed principle was pleasure. Paradoxically but naturally, too, the sterner school made the more popular appeal. Epicureans, however, were not necessarily — the frugal and gentle Epicurus least of all — the fat hogs that poets have called them.

They were apt to be refined people with refined pleasures, and those of them who took up with enthusiasm a philosophic theory of a materialistic sort, in which the gods had an otiose place if any, were moved to this by the cruelty and degradation which they saw in superstition.

The other schools which in those centuries had any continuous life were attractive only to a select few of the intellectual people. Neither the skeptical Academics, who in some loose way were affiliated to the school of Plato, nor the men who were equally vaguely associated with that of Aristotle, signify for our purpose, except as showing the prevalence of keen intellectual interests, without as a rule the output of any remarkable intellectual force. The greatest exception is that among certain schools — notably, so long as they lasted, among the Pythagoreans, who moreover had been from the first a sort of religious order with a high rule of life — science still progressed in the spheres of mathematics and of astronomy or elementary cosmography. It is a noteworthy fact that the Copernican system of astronomy came near to being established by the Pythagoreans of the Hellenistic age, if indeed Plato and his Pythagorean friends were not on the point of anticipating them. Biological science, which had been pursued in the school of Plato and with special vigor by Aristotle, did not entirely die out, especially since medicine continued naturally to be practised with earnestness. But many mathematicians, from the first, had had a strange habit of treating the facts with which they dealt as somehow significant of moral or cosmological principles with which they had nothing to do. And medicine, with its attendant botany and zoölogy, readily took up with myth and idle folklore or with dogmas which it supposed to be derived from philosophy or religion.

The Hellenistic age was thus one in which both moral earnestness and intellectual activity were far from uncommon. Discussion was apt to be keen, and new ideas met both with eager sympathy and with eager criticism. But the hopes which philosophy had once conceived might have seemed then forever frustrated, and the reason of civilized man, stirring as it was, easily came under the spell of superstition or of ancient but ill-founded authority, scholastic or sacerdotal.

The great philosophers had never conceived the idea of any fundamental reform of the religion of their peoples generally, even if we suppose them all to have arrived in their own minds at any clear reconciliation between their own principles and the worship of their fathers. The exclusion from the city of all definitely vile elements in current mythology was the utmost extent to which they thought it possible to go, even in an ideal city; and in their own actual cities they could do little even toward this. Nothing to which reverence attached was lightly to be disturbed, and loyalty to the community involved loyalty to its ancestral gods. To questions which occurred to common people as to the relation of their own gods to other people's other gods, or as to whether gods existed at all, philosophy in the days of its strength could give no answer. Meanwhile it was helping to promote the habit of questioning, and was bringing into currency ideas about the world which would enter into the rising ferment of general religious opinion.

Long before the Christian era, gods conceived of as specially belonging to a particular city had begun to seem of small account, and probably the system of gods and goddesses associated with Olympus, with which classical education makes us acquainted, never had any very strong hold on belief. One city or nation became ready

to accept a god from another nation, as being its own under another name or in some way easy to fit into its fluid polytheistic scheme. Impressive or exciting rites brought from afar spread rapidly with the special deities that they involved. Monotheistic belief accommodated itself easily to polytheistic worship. The ancient civilizations and priesthoods of Egypt and Babylon and Persia — from the two first of which early Greek philosophers had merely borrowed certain long-ago discovered facts used in surveying or in astrology — gained a fresh reputation for wisdom; and their ideas of theology and of the physical universe traveled far, carrying with them also the elements of astrology and magic and a plentiful lore of demonology. Pious philosophic minds labored to construct for themselves harmonies of the religions round them, and leavened them with conceptions drawn from philosophy — as, for example, in regard to the relations of mind and matter, body and soul, reason and sense perception. Meanwhile interest in a life after death steadily grew. In short, the Hellenistic age teemed with religious life and religious zeal, without at all ceasing to lack religious enlightenment.

There is a special interest for us in that kind of Hellenistic theology which is called Gnosticism. The celebrated Gnostic heretics of the second century A.D. were men who attempted to interpret the figure of the Christ so that it would fit into this system. But Gnosticism itself had existed long before and continued in an avowedly non-Christian form long after the Christian era. In any summary of its doctrines we must remember its composite origin, and not suppose that every feature of it, as now represented to us, was necessarily accepted by all its adherents. The melancholy fate of man separated him, it seems, in a twofold way from that divine life with which

he had some remote kinship. His soul while in the body was entangled in gross matter, and when freed from the body at death it was separated from the outer heaven — where dwelt that divine being with which, if it were ever to be happy, it must be reunited — by a huge system of concentric spheres that overarched the earth. These spheres were figments of early astronomy to account for the movements of the heavenly bodies. Each was under the sway of its own ruler or "archon." These rulers were originally the heavenly bodies themselves, upon whose supposed sway over mortal destinies the whole trade of the astrologer was founded, but they resembled the general company of spirits or demons, neither gods nor men, with whose ways magicians were conversant. They might be thought of as malignant powers whom the right spell, if one knew it, would control, or as neutral and indifferent powers whom it would propitiate, or, it seems, there might be a pair of them, good and bad, to each sphere. In any case the only way of escape lay in the possession of Gnosis or knowledge. But it must not be supposed that knowledge meant that exercise of the reason which a man like Aristotle, with his religion fading, still regarded as the life of the immortal in us, which every man up to his capacity ought to live. It meant, on the contrary, the possession of certain information which had long ago been given into the keeping of certain priests or sages. Doubtless there existed a tendency to put a better interpretation upon the affair, but certainly Gnosticism in many of its forms dealt in a lore as to the spells — such as calling him by a string of little-known and outlandish names — by which a formidable spiritual power could be won to one's purposes, whether in this life or in the dreaded pilgrimage after death.

The literature that scholars put before us as illustration

of Gnosticism belongs to various and uncertain dates and is, above all, fragmentary. It contains praises of some deity which recall the Bible; curiously enough, some of the amplest of these occur in connection with such petitions as: "Protect me from enchantments . . . give me success in lawsuits . . . make me victorious . . . make me fascinating to women . . . my will be done." At the other end of the scale might be quoted exhortations to virtue which contrast with Jewish and Christian teaching in one respect only — perhaps the most important — namely, that they are merely negative. Taking the movement at its best, we may guess upon the whole that it never succeeded in making the identification of the divine with the righteous quite loud and clear; and further, that as the great Greek philosophers themselves were upon the edge of doing, it valued what we may call morality as an element in the detachment of the mind from those material things which it refused to regard as the works of God.

Unlike those great philosophers, Gnostics seem to have been inclined to suppose that the mind apprehended divine things in moments not of its greatest energy but of its least, and in states of trance in which the perception of things of sense was suspended. Visions and ecstatic states seem to have been much valued — a point in which no doubt Gnostics resembled a large part of the early Christian community. They spent, however, great mental industry in seeking some solution for the question — not, as we should put it, of the origin of evil, but of how the divine being ever demeaned itself to create a world at all, and that a world of matter, of change, of death, and moreover of sex. The solution of the question was sought in some first offspring of or emanation from the divine being, and in the progeny of this son or emanation. In the detailed working-out of the story there was scope for

that whole cosmography of the spheres, for the subordinate divinities of diverse mythologies, for figures drawn from myths of Plato, — which that good man can never have intended to be so used, — for such conceptions as that of "Nous" or "Logos" or reason, and for all the first ancestors, Adam and many more, from whom various peoples had traced the descent of the human race. Much of this piecing together of bastard physics and metaphysics with fairy tale that had lost its savor was governed by a motive which commands sympathy and respect; it was to bring the varied religions which different branches of mankind cherished into harmony with one another and with philosophy.

These last observations apply no doubt to many who would not be classed as Gnostics. And there were others besides Gnostics who looked not only for a history of how man descended from the Divine, but for a channel of communication through which man might receive the means of returning whence he came. Gnosticism in particular was inclined to look for some divinity or semidivine being through whom had been delivered to men of old the saving knowledge which might guide its possessors back. Such was the function of Hermes Trismegistos ("Three-times greatest"), who became closely associated with or identified with the Egyptian Thoth, and became also the subject of some celebrated but as yet only partly interpreted literature. The original Greek Hermes, among his many and varying attributes, had been the messenger of the gods and also the guide of the souls on their way to the underworld. The question arises how far he was now regarded as the guide of every individual soul that escaped from this material world into the world of the divine. So far as existing information goes, he was never exactly regarded as this. He became a favorite object of invocation

in prayer, and he figures as the bringer of the original revelation from which saving knowledge might be derived. There, however, — in all that we hear of him, — his function ends; the individual possessed of that knowledge finds his own way with its help.

It does not appear, therefore, that this great personage of Gnostic theology presents closer analogies to the figure of the Christian Saviour than did the special deities of the more famous cults to which we must next turn; indeed these latter are in one way more like to that figure, in that they were regarded as the heads or lords of great brotherhoods of men. In each case the broad resemblances to Christianity and the broad differences are easily enough seen, and little importance attaches to the presence or absence of some mark of resemblance which may or may not prove on closer inquiry misleading. But it may be well at this point to say that the particular idea or sentiment associated with the word, "Saviour," is not, as some scholars have suggested, to be found in the case of the cults about to be mentioned, any more than in the worship of Hermes. It is a curious example of a readiness to overdo resemblances — which should not, on the other hand, be belittled — that in the texts cited on this particular point the actual word used of the deity in question is not "Saviour" but "Saved."

Except that the same mind was often open to both influences, there is no clear connection between this occult science and the famous mystery religions which had first arisen under more primitive conditions of life and could appeal more widely to human nature. These latter diffused themselves from widely distant places of origin and preserved their separate existence, yet they were not opposed to one another. They overlapped and intermingled; each was in outward respects indistinct and

variable; and we may speak of them under one head, since men who practised one or another of them did so. A summary statement about them will be sufficient if it gives enough prominence to the reasons for which one or more of them might be thought to have influenced Christianity very early.

The name, "mystery religions," signifies that in all these cults there were, among those who might participate in their ceremonies, inner circles of devotees admitted by rites of initiation, — or more often by a succession of such rites, — the nature of which was not to be divulged, into a closer fellowship with the deity or deities concerned, and into a knowledge of divine matters and an enjoyment of divine benefits in which those outside had no part. In every case the worship was associated with the belief in a future life, and the benefit promised to the initiated was chiefly, if not entirely, the securing of divine favor instead of divine vengeance after death. In every case the doctrine of a future life had become the chief association of the myth round which the worship centred, though certainly in some cases its original associations had been with such matters as the abundance of crops or the fertility of flocks and herds.

The chief type of myth around which mystery religions centred was one that appeared also in many forms of worship which do not seem to have acquired the same mystic character, and which remained centred round some one famous shrine. It was plainly symbolic of the death and renewal of vegetation year by year. The great goddess round whose shrine the Eleusinian mysteries arose was called literally "Mother Earth"; the yield of the earth was represented by her daughter, who was carried off by the god of the underworld, for whom she mourned, and who in time was restored to her. Elsewhere the

beloved one whom the great goddess lamented and recovered was a young paramour, Adonis, Thammuz, or Balder. In some places the goddess of the myth is not the fertile earth but the spirit of fertility and reproduction, or of love, or of lust. Elsewhere again she is to be found surprisingly identified with a goddess also stated to be the moon, perhaps also frequently described as a virgin. The explanation is, of course, that the religion of every neighborhood or every tribe, though ready to admit many gods, tended to bestow its worship on one great divinity, — curious as it may seem, this great divinity was in a large part of the world female, — and that this one great power might naturally have any number of different functions ascribed to it. The younger being, generally male, associated with the goddess, is in a sense a subordinate figure but tends to attract more enthusiastic attention from the worshipers, for he is not exactly a god at the beginning, but a mortal raised to immortality, a link between the human and the divine. It must be added that when this being is distinctly the goddess's paramour what happens to him is not necessarily death and revival; Attis, the consort or attendant whom the Phrygian Cybele soon brought after her, when she was transported to Rome in the shape of a large black stone to help against Hannibal, had been unfaithful to her; he then with his own hand deprived himself of his virility, but finally was healed of his self-inflicted mutilation. Sometimes, as the tale seems to have been told, he died of his wound and was revived; sometimes the goddess herself inflicted the mutilation upon him. The explanation and attendant circumstances of the whole transaction were related in various fantastic and unpleasing forms. Thus this one type of myth fluctuated from clean and beautiful shapes to shapes which were more or less obscene.

Similarly the worship which attached to it must not be thought of as ever wholly beautiful or as prevailingly obscene, but as readily taking a higher or a lower bent or one that was merely extravagant or ludicrous. This was more particularly so with the worship of Isis and Serapis — often identified with Osiris — which the first Ptolemy established at Alexandria, as the common worship of his subjects, but which had come to Rome before the Christian era, and which was practised with great pomp at Cenchrea, the port of Corinth, very likely by the time when St. Paul was there. Greek was its official language, and it is said to have been instituted with the help of priests from Eleusis, who doubtless imparted to it something of the character of the Eleusinian mysteries. But it took its main materials from Egyptian mythology, and its Egyptian priesthood are alleged to have prided themselves on adapting this interpretation of it to the different tastes of different worshipers. It is clear that they were not always averse to exacting large payments for initiation; but it is also clear that some of them impressed those who paid these fees as venerable, benignant, and holy men.

The wide range and influence of this cult was rivaled or surpassed by that of the Phrygian rites. Phrygia was probably the original home of a mystery movement which had swept over Greece many centuries earlier. Practised under some restraint in Rome when they were first domesticated, these rites began to break out there with greater splendor of public pomp and with wilder excesses on the part of initiated votaries during the very years of the first Christian missionary journeys. They seem to have been marked above all by undisciplined emotionalism — the strange but familiar state of mind which may pass readily from self-indulgence to self-mortification and back again. Besides drinking the blood of victims or

bathing in it, enthusiastic worshipers would flog themselves, gash themselves with knives, occasionally castrate themselves. But the cult could lend itself to a sort of wild asceticism without gaining repute as a school of virtue. It was in this religion that the "taurobolium," afterwards copied by the worshipers of Mithras, is first known to have been practised. We hear of it first in later days than those of St. Paul, but it and its symbolism probably belonged to earlier times. It consisted in the slaughter of a young bull on a grille, under which a worshiper had laid himself to be drenched with the blood and thus to qualify for a blessed immortality.

But obviously a mystic lore about an after life might be attached to other kinds of myth than those connected with vegetation; myths concerned with heavenly bodies that set and rise again would do equally well. Nor, indeed, were the creeds which traveled far with the movements of soldiers, of merchants, and of slaves, and which added to the ferment of religious ideas in the widening world of that time, necessarily of the "mystery" type because in the loose modern sense they might be mystical. There was a great Syrian goddess, quite distinct from her of Phrygia, whose attributes seem to have been various and uncertain, though in the far distant lands to which she traveled, they appeared on the whole discreditable. In Syria itself, on the very confines of Palestine and around and in the heart of the city where Paul first testified to the Christ, all manner of myths and doctrines met and mingled. Baalim might be collectively revered as the host of heaven, or a local Baal, lord of the soil in his own locality as well as of the sky, might be associated — in this case as the predominant partner — with a divine lady. But of Baal or Baalim or the Dea Syra, as also of the deities who were not Syrian but Phœnician, and of the identifi-

cation or connection of any of them with other gods or goddesses, the learned report nothing but confusion. Certain it is that Syrian religion excited horror by general voluptuousness, by organized and consecrated lust, and by the atrocity of human sacrifice. It would be a very false inference that it never struck chords to which the wholesome and the higher feelings of men responded; but it should be noted that a Jew, not less than an old-fashioned Roman but rather more, would be apt to regard all the religions which we have mentioned in the lump, and to judge of the lump by the worst features of the worst of them.

The religion of Mithras, distinctly a mystery religion disposed to have friendly relations with other mystery religions and to borrow from them, yet stands apart. It came from Persia and is thought to have been confined in the Apostles' time to its native country and a few small colonies of Persians in Western Asia. Moreover, its far progress a little later is thought to have been chiefly in relatively northern regions. It is, of course, owing to an accidental result of the Roman army-system that we find a temple of Mithras marked on the Ordnance map of Northumberland. But around the year 150 it was widely enough known for Justin Martyr, in writing to Antoninus Pius, to speak of the resemblance contrived by the devil between its rites and the Holy Communion. And whenever it began to spread we must suppose that Persians as well as "Parthians and Medes and Elamites" came to Jerusalem. The history of the figure called Mithras is entirely bewildering. But we may take it to have stood, during the great period of this religion's course, for the principle of light — light physical, intellectual, and moral, waging long and hard, yet in the end victorious, conflict against the principle of darkness. Mithras is a single

figure, not the lord or the fondling of any companion goddess, but a warrior in a high cause, inured to hardship and grief, not altogether difficult to compare with the suffering Redeemer. His rites had a certain austerity. His votaries — chiefly or only men — were vowed to brave, true, honorable, clean and continent life. His religion has been described as a great religion for a soldier; and the limitation to its attractive power, at the first and at the last, lay probably in the hard fact that we cannot all be soldiers.

The greatest vogue of the mystery religions belongs to the third century A.D. The numerous inscriptions lately found bear witness to their wide range and their profound influence on individuals, but seem to be generally undated; and there may be some uncertainty as to when and where any one of them really possessed some particular feature ascribed to it. Nevertheless, the probability would seem to be that, at the time which concerns us, an intelligent, traveled Jew, especially one upon a mission to the Gentiles, would have had his attention arrested by almost all the characteristics, impressive to us, which these religions or any one of them exhibited.[1] Only we must not take it for granted that these were the only or the chief things that struck them in the religious life of the pagan world.

One of these characteristics was that such religions afforded to men in humble position, to dwellers among a strange people, to slaves, to citizens of a once free state now powerless to resist or influence the command of a single overlord, fellowship in a far mightier community, fellowship bearing with it the delights of equal comradeship with other men and of conceived intercourse with

[1] It is surely not improbable that our Lord, living on the confines of Syria and of Phœnicia, was well aware of the general features of mystery religions.

the Divine. They brought also an immortal hope, solace enough for much earthly sorrow; appeasement of that haunting dread of death which paganism, so often assumed to have been joyous, seems to have fostered to a degree of intensity rare among ourselves. They offered, on some terms, forgiveness of sins, whether those sins were infringement of some rule of superstition or recognized moral offenses. They had baptisms to purify, and common meals in which, though the paten might be a tambourine and the chalice a cymbal, the god was held to participate, and which might be thought of as anticipating a heavenly banquet to be shared with him. Stress was laid on the efficacy of blood to purge away sins; the drinking of it — in this case literally — imparted a spiritual support. The eating of sacrificed flesh gave spiritual sustenance. To the amount of correspondence which it is possible to trace between these ideas and Christian sacramental doctrine no limit at first presents itself, except that it seems to be definitely mistaken to say that ceremonial eating and drinking were ever regarded as the partaking of the substance or the life of the god. That god was in some sense an intermediary between God and man; he had died, he was risen, and as St. Paul said, "Ye be risen with Christ," so at a rather later time some pagan initiate said, "I have risen with Osiris." It may well be possible to add, without being fanciful, to the list of resemblances between Christianity and these religions. But it is already full enough and I hope strongly enough stated to show why many people think that Christianity borrowed from the others much of what we commonly think its essential character.

Before we pass from this rough survey of the mystery religions we ought to ask whether we have any means of judging how far their influence on life was good. We must

not assume that they generally lent themselves to gross abuses. We know that men of noble character could find in them elevating thoughts. Many of us, even of those who think that civilized men may pass beyond the religious stage to something better, are apt to speak as if religion in all its forms was a single thing, demanding always high respect. And there is doubtless much truth in this; doubtless, apart from some abnormal degradations of it, religion in general signifies the presence of some thought which takes a man outside his lesser self and his pettier interests. Yet there seem to be many individual cases in which addiction, apparently sincere, to the cause of the highest religion has a baneful influence; and such instances put us on our guard against thinking too indiscriminately of "religion" in the lump. None of the doctrines or sentiments which have been mentioned as in some sense common to Christianity and the mystery religions has necessarily an ennobling effect. Belief in immortality has, I venture to think, generally grown with the growth of serious thought; paradoxically it does not generally connote an undue preoccupation with imagined concerns of the future, but a due intensity of regard for certain things present to us now; yet certainly in some cases it does take the former shape, and there have been religious movements and schools which have encouraged it to do so. When it does mean the morbid extension into another world of an already excessive interest in ourselves, or perhaps merely a childish appetite for misinformation about what we are meant not to know, few things can be less admirable. Again, in some form the consciousness of sin that needs to be forgiven is, I believe we all find, a necessary element in any sustained effort to lead a life worthy of a man; yet it is obvious that what may be described in almost the same words may be some-

thing merely contemptible. It all depends on what you take to be the real sins, or how you conceive of the offended Power, and what sort of propitiation you think that Power capable of accepting. Broadly speaking, it seems that every element which we think characteristic of the higher religions is capable of perversion into something utterly unwholesome, or perhaps we should say is liable to be counterfeited by something utterly unwholesome. It has not, I should suppose, often happened that an energetic or a long-enduring religious movement has been founded chiefly upon unwholesome feeling or tended chiefly to make men abject. But there is a well-marked type of mind which seeks for itself a border zone where reason and unreason, high emotion and sensuousness or sentimentality, the childlike and the childish, the noble and the ignoble, the clean and the tainted, the unselfish and the selfish can more or less comfortably cohabit. And, clearly, those mystery religions with which it is sought to compare Christianity had no strong tendency to disturb the peace of such minds.

We now possess writings by only two men, Plutarch and Apuleius, who speak of the mysteries with decided sympathy and with inside knowledge as initiates. But all that we know tends to confirm the impression which their testimony conveys. Plutarch is the noble and simply pious Greek gentleman that we know in other connections; he is well aware of the difference between superstition and religion — indeed, we owe the distinction chiefly to him; but at the same time he is easily pleased with a nonsensical sort of symbolism and is delighted to accept the claims of priestly castes to have inherited secret stores of ancient wisdom. He and his wife have derived from the mysteries a spiritual peace and consolation in sorrow which other people lack. Nevertheless he

warns his readers plainly that the mysteries lend themselves to wrong interpretation; great good is to be got from them, but upon condition that he who seeks it takes with him philosophy as his "mystagogue," that is, as the guide and interpreter who really initiates him. Read in connection with Plutarch's own avowal of gratitude for what the mysteries have been to him, this single warning does away with any idea that the mystery cults set forth with energy any specially noble or worthy type of religious thought.

We may be prepared then for a less solemn view in Apuleius, who took with him as his guide no philosophy worth mentioning, only a light-hearted, gallant, and kindly zest for life with all its varied incidents — a person whom it is impossible not to like, but with about the least degree of deference that is compatible with liking. In the *Metamorphoses* he tingles with eagerness to let out all he can of the secrets which he is sworn to keep. In the *Apologia* a charge — presumably not very formidable — of sorcery has given him an evidently welcome chance of further innocent self-display. It is not to be suggested that the mysteries corrupted him, or that they failed to arouse in him poetic and reverent thought. He cheerfully pays the large fees which his initiators do not fail to extort from him, and does so, we may believe, not wholly because he will extend his connection as a lawyer. He takes chastity vows no less cheerfully, and presumably keeps them. When he imagined Isis as revealing to him her real identity with awful cosmic powers venerated from of old under ten other names, doubtless

> A thought arose
> Of Life continuous, Being unimpaired,
> That hath been, is, and where it was and is,
> There shall remain.

But the whole episode in which this talk of mysteries occurs is but the appropriate conclusion of a nonsense tale. It is in keeping with his chatter in the *Apologia* about that obscene bag of tricks which he had collected as a precious hoard of charms and mystic emblems. Honor to any exponent of the so-called "joyous" paganism of those days who was not too portentously heavy-hearted. But if, as seems certain, he was quite a favorable example of the average initiate, mystery religion had nothing to boast about in an intellectual or a spiritual regard.

Over the face of these turbid waters the Spirit of God brooded. The indeterminate morality of these much-talked-of theologies and cults and the almost touching imbecilities to which they lent themselves need not blind us to the many ways in which their followers may be said to have been seeking God, "if haply they might feel after him and find him."

Note: I should not like to enter upon my argument in the next chapter without referring the reader to books where the opposite view to mine is upheld. Wilhelm Bousset's *Kyrios Christos* (2nd ed., 1921) is the completest statement of such a view. Reitzenstein's publications are of no less importance, especially in regard to Gnosticism, as to which see especially his *Poimandres*, an edition of a part of the curious collection of pagan Gnostic writings called the *Corpus Hermeticum*. His view as to the date of this is disputed, and so therefore is his view that the very early and odd book, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, included in most editions of the Apostolic Fathers, borrows ideas from *Poimandres*. It does not however matter in the least for my purpose in the next chapter what sources *Hermas* borrowed from: for of course there was a borderland between Christianity and paganism. A student interested enough in the matter should read, besides the main text given by Reitzenstein, the document called the "Naassenerpredigt," which he also prints. Those who do not know either German or Greek will probably find the best English statement of views opposed to mine in Dr. Percy Gardner's books, — always to be

read with interest and respect, — especially perhaps *Exploratio Evangelica* and *A Historic View of the New Testament.*

As a general account of the mystery religions in their whole course (with no distinct opinion given on the present controversy) Franz Camont's *The Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism*, translated and with an introduction by Grant Showerman, is excellent and very interesting. As to books written from the point of view taken by myself, Chapter V of Part III of Dr. Stanton's *The Gospels as Historical Documents* seems to me extremely good. The essay on "The Gnostic Redeemer" in Dr. Edwyn Bevan's *Hellenism and Christianity* is also valuable. I suppose I should tremble before recommending a writer of such very decided orthodoxy, but in this, as in so many other branches of learning, Bishop Gore treads with very sure feet. (See *Belief in Christ* and *The Holy Spirit and the Church.*)

Really, however, a broader view of the life and thought of the time is wanted. Dr. Samuel Dill's *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius* (Macmillan) is the best single book for this purpose (though its title may not suggest it) and is first-rate. Dr. E. Bevan's essay (as well as the others) in *Studies in the Hellenistic Age*, a little book recently published by the Cambridge University Press, is also admirable. And I cannot help referring to the new and very good translation of Epictetus by Dr. P. E. Matheson (Oxford University Press). I speak with an indistinct recollection of Paul Wendland's *Die Römisch-Hellenistische Kultur* (not, so far as I know, translated); but it is a book of great interest, in which a reader desirous to confute my next chapter might find support.

XIII

PAGAN INFLUENCES ON CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

What was the chief effect produced upon the thought of the early Christian Church by contact with this curious world of Gentile theology? We can trace clearly enough the influence of pagan religions upon the practices and the general tone of Christianity in later centuries, when the Church could aspire to dominate the Empire and to win the nominal adherence of all its inhabitants, but with a good deal of competition on the part of the greater mystery-cults. But that has nothing whatever to do with our present question. We have here to consider developments which were substantially effected within twenty years of our Lord's death at the outside, and most likely within less than seven years. And the question which we have to ask seems to some people very elusive. Christian teachers, with their own ideas not fully shaped, had to meet the questions which Hellenized Oriental and Orientalized Greek minds were specially prone to ask, and to deal with cravings of human nature in the particular form which they took in those minds; and moreover, they had to translate, expressing in one language thoughts — not yet fully grasped — which had recently come to them in another language. The terminology available for the purpose in the two languages by no

means corresponded. Powerful associations stirred by certain words in those who habitually used the one language might simply not exist for those who spoke the other.

Now these two causes, and especially the latter, produced very extensive results, as we can easily see if we think of the names or titles applied to our Lord in different parts of the New Testament. "The Christ," that is, "the Messiah," a title of much significance to a Jew, becomes "Christ" — a proper name, which has lost its original meaning almost as much as the name "Jesus," but has acquired new and powerful associations in the process of doing so. The title, "Son of Man," disappears, chiefly, we may suppose, because the Greek language, unlike our own, offered no really intelligible equivalent for the original Aramaic or Hebrew; and we may well ask what, if anything, has taken its place. The whole process of change which this illustrates is very interesting. But was not a much more profound change than this produced in the character of Christianity? Did St. Paul and others simply think out more fully the meaning of the Christian message under the compulsion and with the inspiration of having to bring it home to Hellenistic minds and to meet Hellenistic questionings and cravings? Or did they — that is, St. Paul and his friends, or perhaps before his conversion those churches of Jew and proselyte Christians in Damascus, Antioch, Tarsus perhaps, and elsewhere, it may be a section of the original Church in Jerusalem — did they do something which was really quite different? Did they really put out of sight to a large extent what Jesus said and did, and by a subtle process, deliberate or unconscious or half one and half the other, substitute for the real Jesus an ideal, that is, an untrue figure, whose attributes, functions, and relations to God and man were largely derived

from conceptions current in Hellenistic theology? This broad distinction between two possible proceedings is surely plain. Was the development of doctrine which we can trace in the New Testament substantially due to borrowing Hellenistic ideas, alien to the actual teaching of Jesus and the impression which His presence wrought on Jewish disciples? I think we have sufficient material for answering decidedly that it was not. The evidence sometimes supposed to prove that it was proves nothing of the kind, and what we do know of the men supposed to have fashioned their creed in this way makes anything of the kind most unlikely.

The view which I am rejecting is, of course, widely received, and I cannot here discuss it minutely, but before serious teachers speak as if it were proved they ought, I think, to make some close and critical scrutiny of the actual arguments of those who they think have proved it. I mean no disparagement of the laborious scholars who have made the attempt to prove it. Herr Wilhelm Bousset's *Kyrios Christos* (second edition, 1921), if I may take it as an example, is a sustained and resolute attempt to prove it, distinguished by the exactness with which the writer states the real evidence upon which his contention is based. But for this very honorable reason it must be examined very carelessly if one is to escape seeing the insufficiency of the foundation to the soaring structure reared upon it. I cannot resist the impression that the liberal students who take Bousset's (or some substantially similar) theory for proven have been persuaded, not by him or his fellow laborers at all, but by the startling effect at first produced on most of us when we learn in how many points mystery religions (or religions which can be associated with them) did resemble Christianity.

On me, I confess, that effect has been very startling; but it is one which begins to dwindle as soon as I begin to ask whether there were not sources quite other than these pagan cults, from which the first Christians might have derived at least as easily the features of Christian belief and worship which are in question. There was their own Jewish religion with its observances. There were certain things which they firmly believed about their own Lord and Master — not to dwell here on (what nevertheless should be remembered) a large stock of sentiments and associations of ideas that seems to be pretty general among mankind at large: the association of water with purification; of blood with life; the association of conviviality, gay or solemn, with loved persons present or absent. And then at once occur several of these points of resemblance, collectively impressive, which Christianity not only may but must have derived from one or other of the two chief sources just mentioned, or from an influence which cannot be overlooked, the inevitable combination of the two.

To begin with a small point: Some or all of the mystery religions may have used a rite which, we will assume, corresponded closely with baptism; this does not alter the fact, of which many people may not be aware, that the Jews of our Lord's time used baptism as a necessary part of the admission of a convert to their community, and that they gave it significance somewhat closely similar to that which Christians have given to it. Again, though mystery cults certainly used for their purpose the joint partaking of food and drink, yet the Jews no less certainly partook solemnly of one loaf and of one cup. And if in the mystery communions a more than mortal guest may have been held to partake in the meal, — which was probably not the Jewish idea, — yet apart

from any question as to who reordained this feast for Christians, could the first disciples conceivably have forgotten that One unseen, whom they thought of as living, had partaken with them of the Passover and of many another less solemn meal? Again, if the prominence of sacrifice in what we hear about the mystery religions and of the idea of sacrifice in Christianity contributes, as I think it does, to the general effect of resemblance, we may remember the prominence of sacrifice in the actual observances of Jews at Jerusalem and the prominence of the idea of sacrifice in the Scriptures which they read. And here we may remark two things further. First, in the Jewish religion, though not in any other, the idea of atonement made to God threw into the shade the idea (said to be more primitive) of a meal shared with a god. In the earliest Christian books, when sacrifice is mentioned the idea is exclusively that of atonement. Secondly, the mystery religions seem to have been permanently wedded to these observances, while in Judaism there was a long-standing tendency to recoil from their elaborate, possibly also from their sanguinary, character, and above all from their tendency to obscure the need for amendment of men's lives. Now what we observe in the New Testament is that the example set by mystery religions is in this most important respect quite inoperative, while the two conflicting strains of Jewish thought act together: sacrifice of living creatures is done away for the future, while the whole past practice thus abandoned is completely justified in the view of those who abandon it. All these are (comparatively, at least) minor points; yet, as one after another of these points of seeming affiliation to pagan religions is examined, we become aware of a certain current, flowing from no pagan source, which is carrying the Christian Church

along; and with attentive consideration of the New Testament, our sense of the power of that current is likely to grow.

I have here to enter for a while upon arguments of a somewhat intricate kind. I am passing to the most important of all the parallels between Christianity and the mysteries, the parallel which some people feel to exist between our Lord Himself and the lords of other worships. At the same time I am coming to the only two important instances (so far as I know) in which anyone claims to trace clearly the assimilation, by Christians, of some definite thing from mystery religions, and claims too that the assimilation was significant. I may say at once that the first seems to me one of many cases in which it is quite possible that Christians used a word because pagan worshipers used it.

It might surprise any ordinary reader to be told that there was anything very strange in the application to Jesus Christ of the Greek word translated "Lord." The English word can be used with many different degrees of intensity of meaning. It is used of God Himself, and it is used also of more than one class of men toward whom no very profound deference is felt to be of necessity due. The Greek word is even more elastic, and apparently the same may be said of the Aramaic word of which it is most likely a translation. Herr Bousset, however, believes that the Aramaic word (*Maran* or some inflexion of *Mar*), though used by St. Paul a little later, was not current in Jerusalem at the date when St. Luke seems to suppose it to have been first applied to our Lord.[1] In that case probably it was the Greek word that was first applied to

[1] Surely in any case, whatever Aramaic word was used — like "the Lord" in the Old Testament and "Kyrios" in the Septuagint — instead of "God" was used because it was expressive of a higher or lower degree of reverence, and deliberately chosen because not applicable to God alone.

Him. But, the argument continues, to call anyone "the Lord" (nominative, not vocative case, and "Lord" simply, not Lord *of* something) would have been a curious usage, demanding some precedent. The argument looks a little stronger when the English translation is used instead of the Greek word. And a precedent was at hand, if, as is quite likely, mystery worshipers in the part of the world concerned already spoke in this fashion of the great figure in their cult. So, it is argued, Christians somewhere caught it up from the mystery people. It should be added that this distinguished writer rules the importance of this point so high as to name his great book *Kyrios Christos* (Lord Christ) in honor of it.

Now Herr Bousset's fine candor enables every reader to see that he has by no means proved his case. His conclusion remains a mere conjecture, with some strong evidence against it. Still, I do not think it should be called impossible. I think it just possible that it may have been so. And what then? The supposition is this: Devout followers of Jesus were situated among mystery folk. They probably called him "the Christ," a term which conveyed hardly anything to their Gentile neighbors. They found some of these neighbors calling the object of their own devotion "Lord." It was a name expressive of high authority. Many of themselves were familiar with it in the Septuagint as an equivalent to "God." It was suggestive to them of the attitude which they were prepared to take as servants and bondsmen to Christ. So they said, "We, too, have a Lord whom we follow." What inference should be drawn from this? Does it tend in the least to show that their conception of Christ reflected their neighbors' conception (say) of Attis? A much fuller comparison between the two "Lords" and their respective relations to their followers is

required; and this derivation of the phrase "our Lord," if true, is by itself only a curious trifle.

We may turn now to the institution by our Lord of the Holy Communion, of which the oldest record is the passage, I Corinthians xi, 23–25. It occurred first, I believe, to a writer whom I respect most highly, Professor Percy Gardner, that really St. Paul dreamed it all (beheld it in a vision, if the phrase be preferred) in consequence of the impression made on his mind by the sort of mystery feasts to which he seems to allude in the preceding chapter, in the words "the cup of devils," "the table of devils." Having dreamed it, he apparently set up this institution among his flock in accordance with it, and the thing had such a success that it caught hold of the whole Church, and eventually writers so independent of his special influence as the first and second Evangelists substantially incorporated his dream into what they present to us as the record of our Lord's life handed down by his immediate disciples! This is an imprudent, though a daring, piece of riding, and, of course, if Professor Gardner did not clear his fence, there were plenty of others out on the same chase who would look for convenient gaps in the neighborhood. It is necessary, however, to examine this bold and simple suggestion.

If we take the words in our English translation, "I received of the Lord . . ." it may easily occur to us that St. Paul did not really receive from the Lord the statement which immediately follows: that the Lord Jesus took bread. We may say that he received it, if at all, from someone else, about the Lord, and that what he did receive (indirectly) from the Lord was the words which come later: "This is my body . . . this cup . . . This do in remembrance of me." Professor

Gardner's explanation of the difficulty is that St. Paul imagined or represented himself to have seen the Lord in a vision and to have received from Him the narration which he passed on. Now it has been pointed out that this supposed vision, of which the content is an exact narration of a past event, is quite unlike anything that we gather about the sort of visions which St. Paul or anybody else had. It would also seem a curious thing that the cup and the table of "devils" should have worked this result.

However that may be, no Greek scholar ought to see any difficulty in the language of this passage, or if he did, to see any less difficulty in the explanation offered. There certainly is in the passage a want of sequence, or of due adjustment of one phrase to another, which would be a marked fault in a modern English or — I suppose — in a Latin writer. But this is not an English or a Latin writer; throughout his Epistles that sort of grammatical consideration troubled St. Paul almost as little as it would have troubled Thucydides. On the other hand, Paul's choice of single words is exact and consistent. The word translated "I received" and the word translated "I delivered" form the pair of correlative words which he used together or singly when he was speaking of the tradition handed to him or handed on. (We meet with them together again when he is speaking of our Lord's resurrection in I Cor. xv, 3; and, oddly enough, they are followed, some verses further on, by a quite similar, if less marked, grammatical inconsequence.) Nothing, I think, could well be more certain than that St. Paul here spoke of a tradition which he had handed on to the Corinthians, as he stated, years before, and which he had himself from the first accepted as coming from those who were present when the Lord took the bread and the cup.

Observe now that St. Paul has all along understood, as a part of that tradition, not merely that our Lord said certain well-known words about His body and His blood, but that He also gave concerning the bread and the cup the command, "Do this . . . " Truly we may feel sure that St. Paul, when first converted, found as an established ordinance of the Church this carrying on of a rite whose institution a few years before was related in a circumstantial manner, a manner than which nothing more impressive can be conceived.

I do not think that I am now in the least shocked or wounded by attempts to explain away the origin of the Eucharist; but perhaps I ought to be quite frank and confess that they strike me as one of the silliest pursuits that have ever entertained Reverend and Very Reverend minds.

It would be waste of labor to follow carefully the effort of any writer not otherwise distinguished by sober judgment to show that even at that early date the mystery influence had permeated the whole Church's conception of the Eucharist and its origin. Yet there is a further point to be noticed. Let us turn to St. Mark. The commands, "This do. . . . This do," are not there, though the rest in substance is there. It is due to so great a man as Wellhausen to notice what he says on this point. He ignores altogether any suggestion that those amazing words, "This is my body," "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," were not spoken[1] — that they were the product of fancy or imported from that mystery region in which, as has

[1] As an example of childish eagerness to find a new point anywhere or anyhow, it is worth noticing. Bousset's contention is that our Lord cannot have said this over the cup. If He had said anything about the pouring out of his blood he must, Bousset thinks, have been so grossly theatrical as to time the words to a moment when He was pouring wine into the cup.

already been said, there is no known trace of the presence of any such idea as the words express. But he thinks that St. Mark, though writing probably much later than St. Paul, represents the more authentic tradition, and that the words in St. Paul's account which he omits were an embellishment of the tradition, due to the fact that the disciples had indeed "done this." It seems to accord with his view of Jesus that the Master should not have been concerned to enjoin a commemoration of Himself. Now this is really a case of arbitrary guesswork. St. Mark, though there are sentences and long passages where he proceeds far otherwise, practises as a rule extreme condensation, and in this part of his book especially he produces thereby a great (surely not unintended) effect. Little can be inferred from such a writer's omissions. In this case, when St. Mark wrote, the ordinance was being carried out among Christians, as by our Lord's command. Indeed, since the preceding words were spoken over bread and wine that were being partaken of with a solemnity already practised by ancient custom, and that were to be similarly partaken of again, it is manifest that the words applied to loaves and cups which the disciples would thereafter share. The words implied the command which followed. Mark may well have passed over the express command as superfluous in his narrative. But Jesus, expecting His crucifixion, and full of solicitude about what would thereafter sustain the flock for whom He cared and whom He was leaving, was by no means so likely to have thought the words of command superfluous at the time. So I myself do not doubt for a moment that the words which St. Paul and the First Evangelist relate were spoken. Even if we admit the possibility that they were not spoken, what exact difference does that make? When thereafter the

disciples met at table, they did thereafter "do this" in memory of Him, and (whether by expressly spoken command or not) it would have been hardly conceivable that they should not do so.

What immediately concerns our purpose is that both the very early use of the Eucharist among the disciples and certain very solemn words (commemorated in it) which were spoken at that Last Supper rest upon extremely strong evidence, and the sort of argument by which it is attempted to displace that evidence would be treated with derision in any other branch of scholarship or rational inquiry. But we are not left with only this negative result, that one of the very few definite points advanced in favor of the mystery theory breaks down. There is this further: that here, from the first, there was implanted in the mind of the Church the thought of some lasting, intimate, and tremendous relation between its members and its Founder, which these words of His implied, but which could not be immediately thought out. No attempt, orthodox or unorthodox, to trace the historical growth of Christian belief can be reasonable if the necessary influence of such a fact is for a moment forgotten.

To this fact must at once be added the fact of early belief in our Lord's resurrection. I do not say the fact of His resurrection. Let us, for the purpose of the moment, unflinchingly assume that He did not rise. The swift upgrowing amid the very first Christians at Jerusalem of the conviction that He had risen is none the less certain. We have not only St. Paul's statement about this; all that we clearly know about Apostolic times corroborates that statement irresistibly. It is not worth while to answer any suggestion that in Jerusalem some hearsay report of myths nebulously believed by ab-

horred aliens, about a figure of legend or of allegory, counted for anything in creating the belief that a flesh-and-blood Being, vividly remembered, dearly loved, and beheld in His dying agony upon a cross, had risen and was alive forevermore — quite enough alive to be followed to a similar cross.

Let us now turn to the actual attitude of St. Paul toward mystery religions and paganism generally. There is no occasion to seek far afield for the influences which may have told upon him, for though, doubtless, certain questions about him are very difficult, St. Paul is on the whole one of the most self-revealing writers who ever wrote. Two influences combined were supreme with him. The first was that of Jewish faith, as the Old Testament sets it before us. Hints there are in plenty that he was widely versed in the strange lore — partly the homemade product of the rabbis, partly perhaps of alien origin — which belonged, so to speak, to the fringe of Jewish belief; but the predominance, as compared with this, of the Old Testament (the Jerusalem Old Testament, which did not include the Apocrypha) is all the more marked for that. These, to the entire exclusion of other sources of wisdom, are "oracles of God." This influence is apparent in every page of Paul's, subject only (and emphatically subject) to this, that it has all to be conceived of as in living harmony with another influence stronger still — that which has now been revealed to him. What has been revealed to him is Christ crucified, risen, revealed as the fulfiller, in some way, of a purpose of God which has been at work from the beginning and toward which the patriarchs, Moses, and the prophets in succession had played their preparatory parts. It may be difficult to understand St. Paul's conception of that purpose and its fulfillment; what is certain from

any reading of his Epistles is that such a conception governs all his thoughts; that in his own view, and in fact, Jewish religious training (of the strictest) and the revelation of Christ to him, transforming that Jewish religion, account for everything of importance in his teaching.

It seems often to be thought that this Christ of his is not truly our Jesus of Nazareth, but the mystic Being of his great vision on the road to Damascus and of the many subsequent visions which he claims to have had. There is a fallacy here. In his own view the Christ that appeared to him was the Christ of those whom he had persecuted and of those earlier — and as he says, greater — Apostles who had followed Jesus Christ from the first. Nor, marked as was the difference on a definite issue which arose for a while between him and some of them, is there the slightest sign that on his part and that of his opponents there was ever any sense of difference about the essential character of their message. We may wonder at first why his Epistles are so lacking in reference to the sayings and doings of our Lord's life, and why he gave so little time (and that so late) to learning from the chief of those who had been with Jesus. It is a point on which more may be said later. But the point to be borne in mind here is not what is absent from his Epistles but what is present in them; and that is an overwhelming sense of the significance of Christ's having lived on earth ("taking upon him the form of a servant"), having been crucified, and having risen again. Of these three thoughts, the crucifixion, in a way, stands out most vividly. A real flesh-and-blood man, really crucified a few years ago, — and on that account for the Jews a false claimant to Messiahship, and for the Greeks unworthy of remark, — revealed Him-

self to Paul (at least, so Paul said and thought) as being on that same account the Messiah indeed and more than the Messiah. It was, he says, as a revelation, that is, a vision; but the whole context of the vision is an utterly real man "who loved me and gave himself for me." And it is what Paul would have called "beating the air" to speculate about the nature and growth of Paulinism without grasping the full significance of this difference between his central conviction and anything that could ordinarily be called "mysticism."

These then were the main, the sufficient, and the almost exclusive sources from which St. Paul's ideas came, so at least he seems to testify in every page of him — his allegiance to the old strict Judaism and his allegiance to Christ, which have become to him one and the same.

With this allegiance, Paul takes up a position toward paganism generally which is quite simple and very plain-spoken. We had better at once recall that many ideas, very strange to us, which entered into various creeds and cults of the Hellenistic world, were not peculiar to them but formed part of a large common ground which the majority of Jews (including the strictest) might share with them. Any Jew might easily accept the view of the universe as a system of concentric spheres circling the earth, but with a highest heaven outside them all. As for the legions of unseen beings with which Gentile imagination might people this universe, a loyal Jew might suppose them existent and even be interested in the queer lore which we may call their natural history. His theology could account for them easily. They might be ever so real, but they were no gods. They might belong to the angel host of God's entirely submissive ministers; or they might be evil spirits, powerless to resist God or to molest God's faithful servants. Thus (though in one

sentence he seems to do so) we need not expect that St. Paul, like ourselves, should steadily regard all heathen deities as unreal. For him they may be real enough, but if so, they are devils. I do not know that we can be sure of his exact thought about this matter, or that he always thought the same about it. What is certain is his attitude toward the worship of such beings and toward their worshipers.

In one way his attitude is entirely liberal. In spite of their false religion, many heathen are good men, and though he does not attempt to form a scheme of operation for God's mercy, he does not appear to have any doubt of God's acceptance of them. Also he recognizes (in the Romans) the presence, underneath its idolatry, of some apprehension of the true God in the pagan mind. This — to attribute to him the great speech at Athens in the Acts — breaks out in utterances of Stoic poets whom he knows,[1] and it breaks out in many deeds of righteousness done "by nature" by men who are somehow "a law to themselves." Nevertheless, as a religion, paganism as a whole is all wrong from the start. And it is to him a whole in which nice distinctions need not be made. Its original and all-pervading vice is described by him as "idolatry," when we should rather expect him to speak first of polytheism; but this is intelligible enough; in principle, paganism of all sorts is a way of dragging down the conception of the one true God. And it all tends to evil.

All the nameless vice which was prevalent among Gentiles seems to St. Paul the natural consequence of their perverted idea of God. It is perhaps not fanciful to trace in his latest Epistles some mellowing of his harsh tone toward the religions of the heathen as such,

[1] Tarsus had been the birthplace of seven noted Stoics.

connected with his sense that in the strange world around him, dark as it is, Christ has come and Christ is conquering. In earlier Epistles, at a time when his doctrine of the Christ was certainly in all its essentials fully formed, his repugnance to paganism generally and all its thoughts and ways is quite unqualified. But he moved among the heathen and he liked men as such; it was his mission to preach to Gentiles, and his letters are addressed to churches full of incomplete converts; so his view of the system that enslaved the minds of pagans did not at all prevent his trying to speak in a language that might go home to them, appealing to ideas which he shared with them, and imparting by his oratory new associations to words of which the sound was familiar. It remains unmistakable that his primary attitude to Gentile rites and creeds was one of disgust and scorn such as we to-day cannot feel about things so remote from us.

The reflection of the peculiar ideas of various Hellenistic creeds can now be traced in many passages of St. Paul where few of us would look for them. Phrases which hardly give us pause, such as, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels," or "At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow," or the several very natural uses of "fill" and "fullness" may have borne distinct references which we little suspect. It is possible that scholars may be inclined to be fanciful in seeking for them, possible that they really lurk where they have not yet been seen. In either case the significance of this habit of St. Paul's is plain enough. It can be seen at once in these passages, especially prominent in his latest Epistles, where references can be discovered to the theology which trusted in the thing called "knowledge" (Gnosis), a theology which, it is evident, some minds tried early to combine with an acknowledgment of Christ.

The reality of its hierarchy of "principalities and powers" is not disputed in these passages; they are simply caught up into the aged Apostle's vision of his Lord's triumph. It is not quite clear that all are evil — some of them may be indifferent forces of nature personified, or may really be angels, mere messengers, of God. Still less is it clear that any of them are irredeemably evil; they too shall one day confess that Jesus is Lord. So far as they are assumed to be evil, — "spiritual wickedness," that is, "the wickedness of spirits," "in high places," the "prince of the power of the (lower) air," — their imposing names add a sternness and a stress to the Christian warfare, but they bring with them no paralyzing fear. Two things in regard to them, it is evident, the Christian must not do: he must not pay to any angel among them the worship due to God and Christ, and he must not worry himself with terrors about any of them. However we may interpret in detail some texts about these beings, we are left in no doubt about that whole scheme of theology which specially concerned itself with propitiating them. It is science "falsely so-called," a simple statement[1] which all of us who look into it can cordially repeat, and which agrees curiously with Plato's view of what "Gnosis" ought to mean. For the Colossians it is "philosophy and vain deceits." Again, very justly, it is consigned to the category of "endless genealogies" and of "old wives' fables."

Such is the extreme limit to which St. Paul's receptiveness of pagan theology extended. As to the mystery religions, they are probably specifically alluded to in the words "There are gods many, and lords many." Apart from this phrase, which occurs in an assertion

[1] I Tim. vi, 20, a verse which, on any reasonable view of the epistle as a whole, must belong to the close of an actual letter of St. Paul's to Timothy.

not of our Lord's similarity to the rest but of His uniqueness, the chief sign in the Epistles of St. Paul of that general acquaintance with the mystery religions which he must surely have acquired is the prominent use which he makes of the word "mystery" itself, as well as occasionally of other words which suggest the idea of initiation. The word "mystery" had already been used of any kind of secret, or of mystery in our modern sense; but his reference to its strict technical sense is made clear by his going out of his way in the Philippians to make use of a word which could naturally be used only to denote initiation in the mystery cults, although our translation of it is "I have learned." What he has here learned is not something which he should keep dark, but a secret which anyone might teach himself — that of bearing alike both sufficient wealth and want. So too that Christian mystery to which he elsewhere refers is not a secret to be kept by the privileged person to whom it is imparted, but a secret long hidden from men, now revealed to all who have ears to hear it, a secret to be proclaimed on the housetops. Sometimes perhaps it means simply the knowledge of Jesus Christ, but in one at least of the most remarkable of the passages Paul certainly gives it a more precise application: it is that God's age-long hidden purpose in His special dealing with the Jews as His chosen nation has been to prepare the way for the "hope of glory" now given to all nations in Christ. It is spoken of in connection with the breaking down by Christ of "the middle wall of partition" which had long kept the outside world from sharing in the privilege of the Jews. If we are to see a special intention in St. Paul's frequent use of the word, it must be that of triumphantly proclaiming the essential unlikeness of the Christian mystery to the rest.

But, it may be said, St. Paul's own mental attitude

is not conclusive as to the main question. There were, as Herr Bousset urges, Christians at Damascus before St. Paul went there, and there may have been such at Tarsus, and in other places that he had known far from Jerusalem. What strange combinations of Gentile and Jewish currents of thought may not have taken place in their minds within even a very few years after our Lord's death and reported resurrection? And may not St. Paul have first persecuted and then been converted to the Christian faith of these outlying colonies — not really to the faith of the Church in Jerusalem, of which maybe he knew less than he professes? Such is Bousset's suggestion, and to make it probable, he corrects statements both in the Epistles and in the Acts, with a reliance upon guesswork as against apparently good evidence, which is really worth observing.

The very existence of such a colonial school of Christian belief, markedly distinct from that of Jerusalem, is a mere conjecture, and admittedly a very bold one. The only example from which we can judge of the probable attitude of the Jews of the Dispersion toward Gentile religions is that of St. Paul himself. The only currents of thought which we know to have blended in forming the early Christian creed are that of St. Paul himself, which we have just examined, and the direct tradition concerning our Lord that resulted in the Gospels and in certain Epistles other than Paul's. When we first meet with them they are rapidly on their way toward complete harmony in a common tradition. When the Church, now widespread, had large numbers of Gentile converts and half-converts, and, as was bound to happen at that later stage, Gnostic and other pagan influences did really threaten to invade it, we find a firm and united resistance presented to them. And in no one definite particular in which an early

influence of mysteries or Gnosticism has been thought to be observable can we find upon close observation any ground to suppose it. There is nothing in the whole case beyond that minimum of vague resemblance which at a given time and in a given region the thoughts and ways of different seekers after God might be expected to bear to one another, and beyond the fact that St. Paul uses the language of his hearers as freely as he breathes the same air.

Thus the assumption, so often made by modern writers, that what the New Testament appears to tell us has been somehow explained away by research cannot stand examination. On the other hand, if we read and compare the different books of the New Testament with a comparatively guileless and unsuspicious mind, wishing first to understand what their writers want to say, we may find the growth of Christian doctrines in the Apostles' time fairly easy to understand. Was it not simply the fuller apprehension of Christ's original message, as men were forced to think it out under the pressure of their own new and vivid experiences of life and of the world around them? That is the conclusion for which I shall try to give an outline of the evidence in the following chapter.

Before passing on to that subject, there is yet one broad consideration in relation to Hellenistic religions which I wish to recall. Whatever forces may have moulded the Christian doctrine, the speedy result was something that differed in startling ways from any of those religions. There was in this new teaching nothing at all of mystery-mongering or of dealing in abstruse and occult learning. The Christian mystery, or the Christian Gnosis, was something which the wisest of old had not perceived, but which now stood revealed to all comers. Any man might shut his eyes to it if he chose, but the youngest, the stupidest, nay, the worst might have prompt access to it if

they chose. This was no departure from the spirit of the Hebrew prophets, nor was it really so repugnant to the temper of philosophy in its prime, but it was a complete departure from the spirit which almost universally governed the priestly lore and the theological speculation of the Hellenistic age.

We may associate it with a further difference. Attis or Osiris possessed but a shadowy reality — such as fairies had for our ancestors — for simple-minded belief, while more instructed belief refined them away into allegory or insisted upon the identity of each of them with half-a-dozen other personages of whom half-a-dozen other myths were told. But Jesus of Nazareth was a real man, whom men loved and long remembered. We may or may not suppose that His followers unconsciously came to attach to His remembered name attributes which belonged elsewhere, but in any case they endeavored to "build" their church "upon the foundation" of a perfectly real memory, still living in those who had actually "companied" with him. We may take one view or another as to the historical trustworthiness of those records which make up the Synoptic Gospels, but the image of Jesus which stands out from them has a living humanity which has arrested men's attention ever since. The profoundest theologizing about Him was inseparable from such simple recollections as that He "went about doing good." The very essence of that way of commemorating Him which might seem most mystical lies in the force with which it has reminded all men since that He was actual flesh and blood. In short, the moment that we try to look from the inside at these earliest Christian origins, we see them in violent contrast with the character which any equally sympathetic attempt to comprehend the mystery religions forces us to ascribe to them.

The message addressed to men of all sorts and conditions as men, in the name of a Lord who was emphatically man, was of course a "creed wrought with human hands," and highly unsusceptible in certain respects of being shut up within "closest words"; but in certain respects it was all the more peremptory and uncompromising in its challenge. The breach with Hellenistic theology and all its ways is utter. The monotheism to which the most elevated mind can rise is not going any more to play with or tolerate the polytheism endeared to the many. "Thou shalt have none other gods but me" is an absolute command. The objection might come — for instance, later, from the not very discerning minds of Mohammed and his followers — that the place which was at once ascribed to our Lord was a breach of this command, and we cannot stop here to inquire whether Christian theology as it proceeded was very successful in its method of answering it. But we can see at once that in this very respect Christian theology separated itself at the start from prevailing pagan systems.

Those pagan systems did indeed seek to get away from a polytheism which was merely barbaric or childish, and in either case largely immoral. They set about doing so by conceiving of a God to whose very nature contact with this lower world of matter, effort, pain, sex, birth, and death was repugnant. They were led on to try to bridge the gulf between such a God and all things else by bewildering speculations as to some "only begotten" emanation from this pure and remote Being, still remote from the world but not too remote to be the originator of a whole progeny of further and lower emanations. The result, which by these speculations they strove to make intelligible, was the existence here of creatures with a spark of intelligence akin to God, entangled in the gross

matter of their suffering bodies, and capable of redemption only through some gradual course of disentanglement from all that makes them what they are. Christian thought started with the postulate — doubtless unexplained yet definitely held — of a God whose infinite goodness did not make Him above creating, as with His own hands, all things that are, breathing as with His own breath life into all that live, speaking even by His own spirit to these His creatures, mysteriously free to disobey Him. And the vast gulf which Christian thought also had to bridge, the gulf between Him and them, was bridged in this way: One man, born of woman, to strive, to endure, to enjoy, to die in anguish, was the "express image of His person," the only-begotten Son of God, and was that by the very fact of all the vulgar human sorrow concentrated in Him. This, too, was a paradox; and whether it was more intelligible than the Gnostic paradox with its successive stages of descent from God to man or not, it was quite different. Christian theology, right or wrong, can be seen striding from the first along a way which is absolutely its own.

It is even easier to see the further difference, which, except that it is really inseparable from this, one would call more important by far. The one God thus proclaimed was a righteous God; He demanded righteousness, demanded nothing else, demanded it of all men, and according to the Christian doctrine made open to all men a way in which they might at least begin to share His righteousness.

Of course the best heathen put the claims of righteousness as high as they could be put. It is not to be pretended that the heroism of any Christian known to us was more thorough-going or more genial than that of Socrates. Again, we need not at the moment inquire in

what degree the best heathen conception of moral goodness fell short of the Christian, either in completeness or in its intrinsic fitness to be made to appeal to people generally. Yet the highest thought and the purest living of pagan thinkers led to no sustained effort among them to make popular religion one and the same thing with the loftiest moral aspiration. Indeed, most of them seem distinctly to have thought that religious traditions with a considerable streak of immorality in them had better not be disturbed violently. Christianity sought to destroy them at once and altogether. Nothing is more marked than the instant demand on action which Christian teaching treated as involved in — or rather, as identical with — its assertion of its faith. This was an essential element in Christianity from the first moment to the last of that development of which the New Testament gives us glimpses. And in this respect too, the importance of which cannot be exaggerated, the carrying of Christianity beyond the borders of a peculiar people with its peculiar laws was the irruption of something staringly new into the Hellenistic world.

There is another aspect of this contrast which we ought in conclusion to recognize. Hellenistic theologizing produced complex theories which must have demanded much industrious cogitation on the part of good and — in other respects — intelligent men, but it showed no sign as yet of virile effort of the intellect. Greek philosophy in its brief prime had laid stress upon a fundamental difference between two states of mind: There was the state of mind which really wanted truth, and there was that state which (outside the sphere of pressing material needs) was happy in superficial appearances, in hearsay, in mere fancies, and in the patter of imposing words. Hellenistic theology remained in this latter state. It might busy itself

about the relation of Nous to the demiurge, the æons, and the archons; it might stoop to the homelier topics of the crocodile that has no tongue, the privy member of Osiris, and the eight dog-faced apes; but in either case it came equally near to justifying Plato's violent metaphor of men sitting fettered, with their backs to the light of reality, discussing, as it passed across the wall of their dungeon, the shadow of some object itself fictitious.

We need make here no assumption about the correctness of the central doctrine of the New Testament, but it is unmistakable that certain of its authors had, in St. Peter's phrase, "girded up the loins of their minds." Their reader now may find much in them which is difficult to understand; but in that large part which he does understand he must be aware that these men did mean with their whole souls to be real, to deal with realities, to stand with their feet upon the solid ground of something that was important and quite true, to face facts as hard as "cold iron out of Calvary." And that governing principle of conduct of which I Corinthians xiii is perhaps the chief classical expression, but which three other writers of Epistles grasp no less firmly than St. Paul, marks (if for a moment we may regard it in a somewhat chillier light than we would ordinarily prefer) a fresh and a permanent advance in the slow and interrupted march of the human intellect.

Granted, then, that the pagan religions are not to be thought of with mere aversion and contempt, granted that they expressed genuine human aspirations and kept them more or less healthily alive, yet the great influence which reacted upon the new religion from Jerusalem and Galilee is not to be looked for in their somewhat lurid rites or their somewhat fusty creeds. There were other influences more familiar to us in the Hellenistic and

Roman world, which told upon Christianity with manifest force. The preachers of the Gospel did not merely receive the discipline of having to expound their dearest thoughts to people who were strangers to all their traditions. Those strangers gave them back something in which they had been relatively lacking by reason of the intense Jewish training which fitted them to be the first recipients of that Gospel, yet something which they were well fitted to acquire. For if, as we may suppose, the Jew had generally the more robust vigor of mind, the Hellenist (especially the actual Hellene) had certainly the wider range of knowledge and interests, the more varied intellectual activities. Philosophy had long ago come to a pause in its attempt really to deal with the deepest subjects of speculation; and — apart from the philosophers — the genius of old Greece had touched upon religion only in so far as religious problems are necessarily the subject of the intenser kinds of poetry and especially of tragedy. But the instinct of rational discussion was still potent. The Stoics had handled many practical questions of duty and moral teaching with greater thoroughness and freedom than could easily belong to the Pharisees. The inhabited world and the human race inhabiting it had become objects present to ordinary imagination. Conscious methods and principles of reasoning and a whole arsenal of categories, abstract terms, and familiar distinctions and oppositions of thought (occasionally misleading, but as a rule eminently useful) formed a common property of the Hellenist world from which we ourselves have inherited them. We can perceive the want of them in Hebraic thought, though it sometimes turned its loss to gain. Study of the New Testament should, I think, reveal to us with what ready capacity the first recipients of the Christian faith took

from Hellenism and the Empire the real gifts which these had to bestow.

It is a common remark that Jesus spoke a language which goes straight to men's hearts and minds everywhere. But we need not suppose that His first followers had the gift of that tongue. They could not have propagated His Gospel except by learning to be something more than typical Jews. And that is not all. If they had not got outside the little circle of their race and their religion, they could not have grasped what He had said or conceived what He was. It was in the clash of intercourse with that which we still revere in the Greek civilization of the Roman Empire that Christianity learned to speak, like Christ, a universal language. And in doing so it became the Christianity of Christ Himself.

XIV

OUR LORD IN THE FIRST THREE GOSPELS

We are told that our Lord began His ministry by teaching about the "kingdom of God" or "kingdom of heaven," which He declared to be very close at hand. This "kingdom" was a conception peculiar to the Jews, which would have meant nothing to other people. To understand how our Lord speaks of it, we had better note what scholars say as to the exact meaning of the words used.

"Heaven," in this particular connection, — though of course in many other connections it is not so,— is simply and solely a reverent way of saying "God." The English "kingdom" does not quite correspond with the word which our Lord must have used. "Sovereignty" would be nearer to it. The original word suggested necessarily a state of things in which God exercised sovereign rule, giving actual commands which somebody actually obeyed. It did not necessarily suggest a region where or a time when His rule would prevail to the exclusion of all adverse powers, though naturally it could be so used. It implied that men, few or many, were being governed by God's known will. This obviously is a state of facts which might be present in very different degrees, so that at a given time it might be spoken of as already there or as still to come. Our Lord compared it to yeast, beginning to work in dough, and to a small seed that would become

a great tree. He evidently played upon the strings of the Jewish hope of the kingdom, provoking thought and ultimately causing a complete change in His disciples' original ideas. But it was no strained or juggling use of words that made Him speak of this kingdom sometimes as a thing far remote (for example, in the moving words, "I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine until . . . "), sometimes as a thing just about to come, sometimes as a thing that was there already: "The kingdom of God is within you." These last-mentioned words require us to think of some way in which men were already beginning to live under the fuller sway of God, and to do His will as it had not previously been done.

We may at once notice that as a matter of fact God's will was then beginning to be done by some people more truly than ever before — that is, if we believe that there is a God; if we do not, we must describe the same fact in other words. The presence of a Christian spirit or way of life, impossible to define but quite unmistakable, in some of our neighbors is a fact of which only the most unfortunate or the most unobservant of us can be unaware. Writers in many Christian centuries down to our own have tried to express this spirit in words, often very well, and more recently with an aptness to the circumstances of modern times which is not to be looked for in the New Testament. Yet nothing in later literature quite compares in breadth and force and beauty to those summaries of the Christian life which have been left to us by Peter, Paul, and James — men very different from each other, but living under the felt influence of our Lord and referring all their thought to Him. On the whole, moreover, the world at large agrees in thinking the often fragmentary and often obscure records of our Lord's words in the Gospels more exquisite, more trenchant, and more

final still. And without difficulty we can discover that this spirit of living was really something that came new into the world with Him.

It would be easy to point out the respects in which the highest pagan thought about life lacks, as anybody would feel now, something which the New Testament does not lack; but it is enough for our present purpose to observe this in the case of the thought and the spirit of life with which those among whom our Lord came were familiar. The Old Testament, of course, abounds in passages which have all the beauty of primitiveness, and with the sort of inspired sayings in which some great soul of rare elevation seems to anticipate all that can be thereafter said. But let us look in it for what illustrates the prevailing tone of Jewish piety and righteousness when at a high level, by taking (say) the Book of Psalms — not a few picked Psalms, but the collection as a whole, or some long and rather late Psalm of a kind that is fairly in point, say Psalm CXIX. Much as we shall find that goes to our hearts, it cannot escape us that the good and sincere men who wrote them are very much inclined to self-righteousness and yet are equally inclined to be unhappy in their serious thoughts, unpleasantly confident at one moment that they keep God's laws while their neighbors do not, and terribly weighed down at another moment by the sense that, after all, they cannot fulfill God's will. St. Paul, we know, had suffered under these moods. We turn to the Epistles in the New Testament and find that we have passed into an atmosphere in which self-righteousness and self-complacency cannot breathe, and in which, on the other hand, an extraordinary happiness is often displayed. What we can now learn about the better sort of Pharisaism in our Lord's time makes it contrast with Christianity quite as strongly. I need not further illustrate

what could easily be proved and will not be seriously denied, the fact of history that at our Lord's coming some spirit did breathe upon the dry bones of preceding ethics, that they might live.

To return for a moment to the "kingdom." He spoke of a mystery or secret of that kingdom as already possessed by the very disciples whom all the while He charged with their slowness in understanding what He was and what His coming signified. It was a secret hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed to babes; again, the kingdom, the rule of God's will, could be received only by those who would turn round and become like little children. The secret of that life according to God's will, which was now being brought within men's grasp, was in some way analogous to those things which are easily learned — up to a certain point — by very young people, and learned by older people with great difficulty, with a conscious constraint upon themselves to get rid of much that (usefully upon the whole) has become a habit with them. Riding is a simple example. To a grown-up person who is being taught to ride, what he is told to do must often seem a combination of performances quite incompatible with each other, though each by itself is difficult enough. To a normal boy or girl, properly taught to ride as soon as the right stage in physical development has been reached, this mystery is easily and insensibly solved. Long practice and varied experience will be necessary if the child is to grow up into a really good rider, and there will then be no limit to progress till the decay of physical power has gone some distance; but the enjoyment of riding comes very soon and therewith very soon the indefinable perception of what it would feel like to ride well. Whatever else the "mystery of the rule of God" involved, an essential part in it was certainly played by the knowledge

of what (so to speak) it would feel like to live well — to live according to God's will. In the larger practice of life it has happily proved easier for grown men and women to turn round and become like children than in any minor art, but the analogy of such minor arts readily suggests to us some of the reasons why it was said that the kingdom of God could be entered only as a little child would enter it. Perhaps the "eagerness of infantine desire," the child's happy self-abandonment to any pursuit that it can enjoy, may be the chief reason, or perhaps the frank confidence of a child in those who have once got its affection and trust. We have to ask how our Lord divulged this secret knowledge.

About every work of genius it is a primary fact that it is greater and more many-sided than has appeared in any one man's interpretation of it, even in the cases where the interpreter too has had genius. And any attempt to interpret our Lord must furnish a marked example of this fact. In following a line of thought that may suffice for the purpose of our present argument, the last thing I should wish to do is to depreciate that of which I do not speak or which I do not understand. Turning first to what may naturally be spoken of as the simple moral teaching of the Gospels, I wish only to point out three features of it: first, the uncompromising demands which it makes; secondly, the width of its scope; thirdly, its paradoxical power of appealing to men who are very far from good.

First then, our Lord, as it often seems, does not claim to go at all beyond the principles of action which any Pharisee who was a good man would have been ready to acknowledge; only He asks that these principles shall exclude all others. The service of God must be single. The blessedness sought by obeying God must be the blessedness of

life according to His will. All other good things of life must be absolutely subservient to this; to the utmost possible extent we must stop making any of them our aim in life. Socrates had once tried to teach something very like this. Doubtless many a good Israelite had, as much as any Christian since, given his whole heart to God in this fashion. And yet, till our Lord taught it, this had never become a part of primary moral teaching, and it would not have seemed to be a thing which the ordinary man could be asked to acknowledge as a principle to be applied in ordinary circumstances. It had been a counsel for heroic natures in circumstances which demanded heroism. Never before had any number of people been called upon to recognize in all its fullness, as a principle that held good every moment and in all affairs, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive."

Next it is easy to discover that our Lord's teaching does illuminate the whole field of our practical activities, and — what comes to the same thing — that it imparts some knowledge of a principle which applies everywhere and at all times. (It does not need a professed Christian to see this; perhaps no more searching exposition of Christian principle exists than can be found in the writings of George Eliot.) This, of course, is all the more true because, with a deliberate intention manifested in the reported answers to some men's questions, He left people to apply their own best judgment honestly to the infinitely varying practical problems of their own situation at any given moment.

But the Bible is less read than it was, and there has sprung up a fashion of speaking which demands a word here. It has often been said lately that Jesus Christ occupied Himself with ideal principles which we cannot really apply in practice. By the words "ideal" and

"idealism" people are apt to mean pretty pictures of what it might be nice to do in circumstances which cannot exist. Surely the suggestion that our Lord was guilty of this kind of moral quackery is a poor way of evading the fact that hour by hour His words demand something which we generally do not do, but most certainly can do. Christianity, as most of us can see, really requires an uncommon determination to see things as they are and to deal with them as they are. We may pass over here, with this brief allusion, the twisted ways in which the Sermon on the Mount has been read. Simple people have found in it, no doubt, as the most learned must, much that may set them wondering about its full significance, but they have seldom missed the broad effect of its requirement that personal greed, spite, irritability, and pettiness shall be extinguished, and that an energy of well-doing, self-devoted and ungrudging, shall take their place.

It has been quite honestly felt by some people — for example, by John Stuart Mill — that the New Testament teaching dwelt too exclusively upon what may be called the gentler side of good character, to the neglect of such qualities as are considered more specially manly. This seems a curious illusion when one thinks of the demands which our Lord insistently made upon His actual disciples and of the dauntless and indomitable way in which these men, and great numbers of early Christians soon after them, did eventually behave themselves. But the illusion arises out of a feature in which our Lord's teaching does really contrast with the only ethical teaching worth serious comparison with it. Some of the profoundest moral philosophy of Greece turned upon the observation that there seems to be, necessarily, in sound character a gentle and what may be called a hard side, of which the

one or the other might predominate in a man's native disposition; society and the man's own good required that the gentle element should in the end be the master, but the other was needed too, and the development of both in due proportion was the great problem of education. Our Lord's teaching seems untroubled with this difficulty. He might seem for a moment to appeal merely to what might almost be called soft in human dispositions, but it is evident that from that tender-hearted and utterly unselfish devotion which He demands He expects all good qualities to flow in full measure. At any rate, the Gospels cannot be intelligently read without observing that those who followed Him were called upon to become careless of hardship, of toil, and of danger — moreover, that there was expected of them a quality not always prominent in men's ideas of the saintly character, an absolute frankness and sincerity.

From two points of view we have been led to notice how unprecedentedly and terribly exacting His requirements of man seem. Yet it is the fact that, beyond all other teachers, Jesus Christ has been felt to have a message for the outcast, for the blackguard, and — let us mark this — for the abjectly feeble. There is no question that He has struck men and women in all ages in this light, perhaps in this light more than in any other. The moral law may be said to have become with Him a call to a service in which those who had served well would but aspire to serve better, and those who had not served might yet desire before the end to bear a part, however slight and obscure.

I have begun by dwelling upon the simply ethical aspect of our Lord's teaching, because historians of religion are in one way in danger of overlooking its importance. To an extent which we can hardly exaggerate, our Lord's

significance in the lives of those who first followed Him must have been that of one who brought within their grasp a righteousness which their own Jewish religion had made them desirous of possessing. Some of them had long been seeking a way of obeying the law; some had been stirred by John the Baptist's call to repentance; some had felt themselves to be "lost sheep of the house of Israel." But plainly it would be misleading if we tried for more than a moment to look on our Lord's teaching as having been of the nature of a moral code, a set of rules by which to judge what particular actions are right or wrong. There is indeed no such thing as simply ethical teaching in this sense. All teaching that has influenced conduct to any good purpose has been in a broad sense religious, even if the religion implied has been an atheistic religion — for such there have been and are. It has in some way affected the whole tone and quality of men's pains and pleasures, hopes and fears, likes and dislikes, hatreds and loves. Above all was this so with our Lord.

It is obvious that His moral teaching cannot be dissociated from His teaching about the Father. He called for perfect kindness because "your Father . . . is perfect"; he calmed fear and worry with the assurance that that Father cares; His whole teaching has been felt by some to be bound up in the prayer, "Our Father." If those of us who feel most lost often think of Him, no sentence of His goes further towards accounting for it than the words of the parable: "But when he was yet a great way off his father saw him." It is not to be suggested that the thought of God as a Father was unknown before. It was known both to Gentiles and to Jews. Able Jewish writers who revere Jesus are inclined to suggest that little or nothing in His moral teaching was original. Possibly

nothing except the power of making old things new. And this He did to the idea of God the Father.

But it is impossible to excise or expurgate from the record of Him supplied by any considerable portion of these Gospels, from whatever source it comes, the thought which goes along with this, namely, the thought of His own relation to that Father and to man. And this thought, like that of God and His fatherhood, enters into the warp and woof of His teaching about life. The difficulty which has been felt about the relation of Christian doctrine to His teaching in the Synoptic Gospels is chiefly due to this very fact that our Lord's thought concerning Himself is thus interwoven, constantly implied, not expressly enunciated as if a theory about His person were of any significance by itself.

From the first the effect of our Lord's teaching has been indistinguishable from that of His actions and His bearing. We need not assume here the truth of any particular story, but it was not any ungentle Being of whom the chief memory left was how He went about doing good; not of any timid or unauthoritative character that people said, "Even the winds and the sea obey him." Thus we may say with assurance about Him two things which specially concern us here. They relate to His power over outcasts and to His power over His own disciples. I have alluded to the father in the parable of the Prodigal Son; it is an essential part of the memory which Jesus left of Himself that He went about among publicans and sinners and harlots as it can have been given to few to do, neither indifferent to them, nor disgusted at them, nor afraid of them, perfectly kind, not preaching out of season, yet without the disposition of some virtuous people to make up to the bad man with secret admiration of his supposed virility or to pretend to the poor devil that

there is something interesting in being a poor devil. No less clear is the view which these Gospels give us of His dealing with those twelve whom He chose to be specially near Him; of the patience, firmness, tenderness with which He led them to understand Him and prepared them for the task to which they had been called.

We cannot at once say from the brief and occasionally obscure records of Him that no one else can ever have shown such qualities as these in so high a degree. The points here to be marked are of a different kind: He did regard himself as standing in some incomparable relation to God and man; it was by and in the course of His walking among men in the fashion which we have noted that He declared what He took those relations to be. It was not so much through any express claim of His as through what they saw Him to be among men and among themselves that the disciples formed their belief in and afterward their belief about Him. These points need but little illustration: "Thy sins be forgiven thee"; "This day is salvation come to this house"; "The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins." (We may notice that it is this same Son of Man who seems thereafter to be coming in judgment.) Such utterances seem an inseparable part of His way among the outcast. As for His way among the disciples, it is plain that He claimed unmeasured authority over these His "friends" and His "little flock," that they accepted that authority to the full, and still loved Him.

It is convenient to break off for a moment at this point to ask: How far did our Lord concern Himself with eschatology? "Eschatology" seems to mean talk about the end of the world, and we at this moment, if we thought of the end of the world, should regard the end of any one country — however much one might think its destiny

fraught with good to mankind — as in that comparison a small matter, though even for us a few years ago the immediate destiny of our country was a thought which covered the whole horizon of possible looking forward. For the Jews their patriotism and their religion were indistinguishable, and they had been learning to look for an end of the world which was bound up with the culmination of their own country's fate. As a matter of fact, there awaited that country, within about forty years, a catastrophe which it sickens us now to read of, and which to a Jew who could have foreseen it might have seemed an event which would leave in the world nothing worth having. Nor was it hard to see that this was likely. No talk of things to come could well avoid blending in some degree the destiny of Jerusalem with that of the whole world.

Let us now turn to the famous Chapter xiii of St. Mark. I see no reason to think that it or any part of it is "a little Christian Apocalypse," a solemn fancy composition of someone's which the Evangelist incorporated. The occasion of it is stated in a lifelike enough way. But I observe: that it is a long and intricate sustained discourse of a kind quite different from any other which these Gospels contain; that no hearer could have remembered it with any accuracy; that the recorded hearers were most unlikely to have grasped our Lord's meaning in detail at the time; that, as frequently understood, it makes our Lord deal with a subject with which He professed Himself unable to deal; and that its dealing with that subject largely consists in that kind of awful cosmic imagery with which the ancient prophets had been (and, I am told, Jews ever since have been) wont to speak of any kind of terrible event. I may say that I myself thoroughly believe that our Lord did solemnly warn His disciples of

the destruction of Jerusalem, but I do not for a moment believe that He told them to expect the end of the world in their time. What I wish to say at present relates only to what is certain about this discourse.

And first: if, as I believe, our Lord did speak anything at all like this about the future, then whether what He prophesied came true or not, He certainly did here as elsewhere turn the question which was asked Him to the purpose of His own practical teaching. The disciples, who asked a simple question about a future event, are not told what would have satisfied their curiosity; they are told to be prepared for contests, persecution of themselves, every sort of public calamity, false alarms and false hopes and false Christs; and they are taught that what is necessary for them, and for others too, is alert preparedness and long patience. This is of a piece with His special teaching elsewhere. A considerable part of our Lord's moral teaching is special teaching of His disciples as disciples, which often we can apply only by analogy (though one that is easily drawn) to the case of the ordinary Christian since their day. The momentous, perilous, and exacting nature of their special calling is plainly put before them. That special calling, after He is gone and for all their lives, is still that of disciples of His — not as men who might in a sense be disciples of one who was dead and had left laws that could be obeyed, but as agents for an absent master who will return, it may be soon or it may be late, and who will demand a strict account. We can easily realize how great a difference He thus sets between Himself and (say) Moses, or anyone else in the course of history.

Secondly, we must note that in some great event of vast significance He is Himself to return. The passage in St. Mark does not stand alone in this respect. That

He spoke to the disciples of a coming or of comings of His hereafter is, I should suppose, as unquestionable as that He taught forgiveness or that He spoke in parables.

I may now turn to the two well-known names which He accepted or chose for Himself, and one of which He used in this very passage. It is an essential part of St. Mark's narrative [1] that He never directly gave Himself out as the Messiah; that at a certain crisis He elicited the belief of His disciples that He was this; that He forbade them to make it public; that from that time on He began to tell them of the death that awaited Him; that He publicly confessed to being the Messiah only at the end, when so doing would turn the scales of judgment against Him. I shall not stop to enter into the arguments in favor of accepting this most remarkable story, for I doubt whether any ordinary mind could swallow the argument that it was a fabrication. What does the story imply? I have dwelt already on the different ways in which the Messiah could be conceived of. He might be a mere mundane or a mere spiritual potentate, but we cannot suppose that our Lord could have let Himself be widely recognized as Messiah during His life without frustrating whatever great purpose we can reasonably ascribe to Him. The disciples, it is evident, were gradually prepared to take in a conception of "him that was to come" which was far different from any that had been distinctly held before. If, however, we ascribe to our

[1] For a long time I had one deep suspicion of St. Mark's whole narrative about the Messiahship. It arose solely from his representing the evil spirits as declaring Him Messiah. But I am convinced by Wellhausen's comment on these incidents. The state known as demoniacal possession, and our Lord's having effectively dealt with it must be taken as facts, however they are explained. These passages, as Wellhausen says, recall the amazing effect, upon those present, of scenes which they had witnessed — the wild, unintelligible cries of the afflicted man, the commanding voice that stilled them. To say, as the disciples did in after years, that they had heard the devils acknowledge their conquering Lord, was a perfectly natural interpretation of an actual, overpoweringly impressive, experience.

Lord — as I think that on any reasonable view we must — some clear-sighted design for what was to follow after He was gone, we can see a plain reason why He should wish His disciples at the end to recognize Him under this title. If they had not so recognized Him, many of them must still have gone on expecting the coming of some Messiah, expecting a completion and fulfillment of Israel's history and hopes other than that which was in fact ordained.[1] Yet in what exact sense did our Lord at the end call Himself the Messiah — or, if we adopt the version of the story given in St. Matthew,[2] concede that He might so be called? This much the title certainly implied: it attributed to Him a vast authority, greater to an undefined extent than any that had hitherto been exercised on earth; it attached to Him personally the loyalty which as true Jews the disciples felt toward the commonwealth of Israel; it made the following of Him in itself the law of the kingdom that had been expected.

It is all of one piece with His treatment of the Messiahship that He had constantly in the meantime called Himself "the Son of Man." That He did so can hardly be called in question. The name is frequent, alike in St. Mark and in the other chief source of the First and Third Gospels, not to speak of St. John where it is used equally freely. In the rest of the New Testament it appears only once, namely in Stephen's speech, in a passage perhaps slightly reminiscent of our Lord's use of it at His trial. It disappeared perhaps because it did not bear translation into Greek so well as it does into English. That, having thus passed out of use, it should later be falsely introduced into the Gospels seems incredible.

[1] One of the greatest of recent Israelites, Disraeli, wrote some most remarkable pages upon actual fulfillment of Jewish ambitions by Jesus Christ, in his *Life of Lord George Bentinck*.

[2] See note on page 145.

The ordinary English reader easily attaches to it poetical associations which he thinks explain it sufficiently, and I believe that substantially he is right; but there is a good deal more to be said about the phrase. "Son of Man" is a Hebrew expression which seems to have passed into Aramaic speech, and which could be used as an equivalent for "man" wherever it was intended to lay some stress on the attributes that are common to all men and distinguish them from other kinds of beings. "Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him: and the son of man that thou visitest him" needs no comment. Nor is there anything strange in passages where an individual is spoken of or to as *a* "son of man." In Ezekiel's visions, which our Lord doubtless had in mind, the Creator constantly addresses His human creature, the prophet, as "son of man." But to designate one individual as in a special sense "*the* Son of Man" is startling and arresting.

In a famous chapter of Daniel "one that was ancient of days" takes his judgment seat (apparently on the earth), and "one like unto a son of man" comes before him "with the clouds of heaven." This human figure contrasts with a succession of animal forms that have previously appeared on the scene and from the last of which strange horns grow. The animals are a succession of mighty empires; the horns the successor kingdoms of Alexander's empire. The human figure is plainly said to be "the people of the Lord's saints," that is, the Jews. After the overthrow of the last of the preceding mighty and beastly powers, there is given to this human (more reasonable or more helpless) being "an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away." It would be quite in keeping with Jewish thought if later readers often read into this chapter, in which the writer himself was personifying his people, a prophecy of a great leader who

should arise to represent that people. The figure might easily have been linked in some men's thought with that of the Messiah. It appears that in Christian times Jewish commentators identified the two. And the phrase, "the Son of Man," might easily so have been used as to suggest at once the imagery of Daniel.

Several of our Lord's sayings about the Son of Man were likely to have aroused such associations. Two quoted so much of the very words of Daniel that the allusion was unmistakable. One of these is the saying in Mark xiii (to four disciples in private, shortly before His death), to which I have already briefly referred. The other was momentous. It was a part of that answer to the high priest at His trial, which was the only answer He gave and which turned the scales of judgment against Him. "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man" (this is not exactly in the words of Daniel but the remainder is) "coming with the clouds of heaven." This unmistakable quotation amounted to an outright declaration that the whole promised glory of Israel was to be fulfilled in Him. It implied clearly that He was the unique chief and representative personage of "the people of the Lord's saints," and that His was to be "an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away."

As I have said, words of His to disciples and perhaps to others led the way to His ultimately using thus the words, "Son of Man." Yet it does not appear that when He first called Himself by that name He was alluding to the prophecy in Daniel; He certainly cannot have been alluding to it alone, and we lose the sense of the phrase if we suppose that He was doing so. For neither Daniel nor, so far as we know, anyone else [1] had ever used the

[1] This must be qualified if the composition known as the "Similitudes of Enoch" was known in quite its present shape in our Lord's time. The "Similitudes" survive as part of the Book of Enoch, which was a medley of divers queer apocalyptic writings,

words "the Son of Man" as the designation of a particular individual, and it would have been impossible, if this had been the received way of alluding to a great future leader of Israel, that our Lord should use it freely of Himself when He was carefully avoiding letting Himself be called the Messiah. On the other hand, "son of man" as about equivalent to our "human being" was an established idiom; and our Lord's hearers were familiar with the use of it in the Psalms as meaning mankind, probably also with Ezekiel's use of it as a term of great humility. It was not the thought of some tremendous potentate that He can have meant to arouse or can have aroused, nor even the thought of anyone necessarily a Jew, when He said the Son of Man was "come eating and drinking," and again that He "had not where to lay his head." He was labeling himself as common man or, if in any respect uncommon, then as one "whose

ranging in date, we are told, from before the Maccabees to after our Lord. The whole has been well translated by Archdeacon Charles. The Similitudes are ascribed as a whole to the first century B.C., but there is a question whether the passages now in question were not inserted in Christian times. The first of them describes, in language obviously suggested by Daniel, how before the world was created there was brought before God a being whose "countenance had the appearance of a son of man." This figure undoubtedly represents the people of Israel, whose destiny is in God's contemplation before the creation. Through his mouth God's judgments are uttered in a dreary succession of scenes of divine vengeance upon the Gentiles. A few Gentiles are saved, but it interests the writer more that many Jews are damned. This being, when once introduced, is referred to again as "that son of man," "the son of man who hath righteousness," and so on. In one sentence he is simply "the son of man," being in this heavenly scene the only man present in the company of "cherubim, seraphim, and orphannim," like "the man" among the animals in the garden, in Genesis ii. I think it too much to infer from this, as some writers do, that "the Son of Man" was a personage generally recognized among pious Jews before our Lord came, as existing in heaven from all eternity, and to infer further that St. Paul arrived at the idea of our Lord's existence before His incarnation merely from the "Similitudes." St. Paul is fond of quoting authorities but never quotes works of this class. The only sign of acquaintance with the "Book of Enoch" which we meet in the New Testament is an apparent reference in St. Jude to another portion of the book. The whole rubbishy collection is unlikely to have made much impression on so highly literate a man as Paul in any age. This Son of Man, it may be added, is supremely unlike the Redeemer; he never sets foot on earth. He is an otiose, inactive figure, who exhibits only one definite quality, namely, mercilessness.

visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men."

The prose dissection of poetry is tedious; here it simply leads to this — that all the poetry which ordinary readers have seen in Jesus' own name for Himself is really there.

Thus, when He used this name at the end, He was taking to Himself what to all who heard Him was a position of immeasurable dignity. And, as has been said, He had already spoken to the disciples awful words about the future coming or comings of Himself as Son of Man. He had, it seems, spoken too of that Son of Man who "hath power on earth to forgive sins," as if all men would thereafter be judged by Him. The real meaning of His words about coming again is hard to understand, nor is His language about judgment at all easy. These are subjects worth much study,[1] but they are beside my present purpose. It is, however, well to insist that this name must still, stupendous as were the attributes which He led His disciples to attach to it, have retained that tender significance which it had at the first. For the disciples some link of association must still mysteriously have joined the thought of this great judge and disposer of events with the thought of that common human nature which He shared forever with the weakest of humankind.

Messiah (Anointed as King) seems, then, to have been the common and recognized name by which the Apostles could declare our Lord's claim to the allegiance of the Jewish people; and it seems that, while He kept that name in the background, they were being subtly led, by

[1] As to our Lord's future coming or comings, the most interesting and to me satisfactory piece of exposition is that of Bishop Gore in his commentary on I John ii, 18 to 29, in his book, *The Epistles of Saint John* (may I say, a great little book which everybody might read with advantage).

His uses of this other name, to some conception of a greatness belonging to Him, greater than that conveyed by the title of "Anointed King." We may take it from scholars that to Jewish ears the title, "Son of God," which it puzzles us to find so seldom in the Gospels, would have sounded at first neither so great nor so mysterious as it does to us. It might, if used simply and by itself as our Lord's chief designation, have seemed little more than a complimentary phrase, meaning "favored by God."[1]

The fact that this does not appear to have been a name which our Lord brought into the disciples' use does not in any sense do away with the force of His speaking of "the Father" and of "my Father" in the way in which He did speak. Still less ought it to blind us to the broad fact — a plain fact, as it seems to me — that what the disciples were taught to feel toward God, as also their Father, came to them indissolubly linked with that utter and most confident allegiance which they were bearing toward the Son. It may be worth while to add that, were there no titles of our Lord in these Gospels at all, His consciousness of incomparable authority would be almost as plainly on record. There is but one remarkable saying (Mark xiii, 32) which can be said to limit His authority; it is not, so to say, within the scope of His commission, not in accord with the will of the Father which He came on earth to do, that He should lift the veil of futurity. And more, that veil exists for Him as for mankind.

Of course this view invites much speculation, besides conveying a very weighty moral. Here it is perhaps enough to notice that this, the only sentence which re-

[1] Or "adopted by God," given the status of a son rather than, as before, a slave. *Cf.* (preferably in the Greek) Romans viii, 15 and Galatians iv, 5–7.

stricts His range, is one that yet reveals in an amazing manner His thought of Himself as the Son of God. His consciousness of His authority is plain in all His references to those who came before Him. It is the equally plain implication of a number of parables. It lurks in many a sentence where we are not expecting it; who, for instance, is this who thinks it needful to explain that He is "not come to destroy the law and the prophets"? The use which He made both of the title which He chose for Himself in life and of the title by which He must later be known was as subtle as it was powerful. It was but one element in that blended whole, the teaching of the spirit of the Kingdom which at the outset He proclaimed.

There are but two more passages on which I would say a word: "Come unto me, all ye that labor"—words of which the whole implication is present elsewhere in these Gospels, and which can scarcely be conceived to have been composed by some untruthful genius in the early Church. It is needless to add to what has often been said of the measureless scope of the power implied in this promise, or as we might say, the unbounded pride of this claim. Yet He who here undertakes to give rest to "all . . . that labor and are heavy laden" declares in the same breath that He is "meek and lowly of heart." Such words anywhere else would strike us simply as insane. But here they proceed from one whose teaching upon the whole has struck most readers by nothing more than its surpassing sanity. And for the ordinary reader of the Gospels the sense of Jesus' majesty and force has been at one with the sense that indeed He was meek and lowly of heart. It is a part of the same paradox by which with us the words, "Son of God" and "Son of Man," have come to count as synonymous. The history of Christian dogma begins with the fact that the Apostles

had lived in the presence of this paradox before even so much as its full strangeness had become clear to them.

I only refer here to the bread that was broken and the wine which was poured at the Last Supper because, before I draw a conclusion from this survey, I would wish the reader to have in mind all the principal doings and sayings of our Lord in these Gospels which relate to the birth of Christian doctrine; and of these the Last Supper is all but the chief. How were those who supped with Him to partake in the very substance of His life? What was the "covenant"? It is enough for our purpose at the moment that these are questions which we are forced to ask. Nor, lastly, can I even seem to have forgotten, in all that has been said, that His life was crowned by His death. His disciples had to see and the Gospels compel us to see that life and that death as parts of the same great act.

The result of this long survey can be summed up without very many words.

Our Lord is consistently set before us in these Gospels as conscious of an authority which is beyond any comparison that we can make. Except that He shares in human inability to see very far into the future, we can find no suggestion of any limit to His powers. He is full of this sense of authority because He is conscious of a near relation to God which belongs to Him alone, and to which, equally, no limit can be named; conscious, too, not simply that He is man, but that in some way He is the type of humanity — the full heir, as it seems to be suggested to us, of all its needs, duties, aspirations, joys, agonies, and efforts, who at the dawning of manhood's powers is "tempted of the devil," and from whom his final prayer, "not my will but thine be done," comes with "agony and bloody sweat." If it is at all difficult to see

quickly that these Gospels imply throughout no less than this, it is so only for one reason. Our Lord's first appeal and His appeal to all men was what we might call simply ethical; He came to reveal to His own people and to each man or woman with whom He dealt the secret of God's sovereignty, that is, how they might live in accordance with God's will. All that He has to say about Himself is in a sense incidental to this mission; nor to the last, though He says much which goes beyond what is commonly called morality, is this ever presented as if it could have value or interest apart from its bearing on the lives of men or the life of His people. None the less, our conception of His moral teaching loses its coherence and its force if divorced from that new sense of the relation between God and man which Jesus strove to give to men; and this relation between God and men He did in fact reveal (if we believe it to exist) through the impression which He created of that relation to both in which He stood alone. And lastly, all this teaching is brought before us inwrought in the life that He lived and the death that He died.

If now we think of the men who had been with Him in His trials, and who, when He had gone, stood ready to carry forward His work in the conviction that He was "alive for evermore," two things will be plain to us. Doctrine so learned could not forthwith have ranged itself in their minds in complete and ordered form, ready for its final exposition. But they had known Jesus, living with Him, loving Him and receiving His love, in an intercourse richer and more intimate than could find full expression in writings of the precise character of the Synoptic Gospels.

XV

THE DEVELOPMENT OF BELIEF DURING THE TIME OF THE APOSTLES

I HAVE had to deal, at considerable length, with some matters which I am forced to conclude are not so important as has sometimes been thought. I may hope to treat this concluding and very important part of the discussion with at least comparative brevity, for the evidence is all in my readers' hands, and I have only to direct their attention to a few points by no means strange to them.

May I first sum up the course of the argument so far?

We have seen strong reason for supposing that the Gospel according to St. John is of great historical importance, and that, though with a certain bias, it gives us — more particularly in the scene of the Last Supper — a true presentation of our Lord. But the difficulty was that the doctrine concerning Him, put — more particularly in that scene — into His own mouth, is often thought to have arisen only after His death, under influences foreign to His teaching, and to have been chiefly if not entirely due to Gentile influences that can be traced especially in the teaching of St. Paul. We have examined some features of that Jewish religion from which Christianity first arose, and have seen the great continuity which exists between Judaism and Christianity (a con-

tinuity of which, by the way, one very notable sign is the fact that the Old Testament became at once the authoritative Scripture of Gentile converts to Christ), and have seen that St. Paul especially claimed to be the heir of strict Jewish tradition. We have considered the Gentile influences which are in question, and have had regard from this point of view to the evidence afforded by St. Paul's Epistles and by the Acts as to the course of development of Christian doctrine; and it appeared that the influence exercised upon Christianity by its Gentile environment had not been such as affected in any important respect its vital or fundamental ideas, but had been such as would hasten and help the clearer formulation of Christian thought, and supply that thought with a richer store of language in which it could express itself. Lastly, we have just now seen what the first three Gospels show us about the bearing of our Lord's own teaching upon the doctrine in question.

Let us now recall the doctrinal teaching of the Fourth Gospel and of the Epistles of John. Jesus is here the Son of God; He and His Father are one; God is love; this has been made manifest by the life and death of Jesus Christ; the whole law of life for man is to be found in that loving fellowship with Him and with our brethren which acceptance of these tidings makes possible. What appears to have been the extent of the change which has here come over that theology or Christology of the earlier Gospels which we were considering in the last chapter? Simply this: In the earlier Gospels we have a record, brief but with much living detail, of our Lord's general ministry and of the Apostles' experience of their life in His company. A certain belief about Him resulted from it all; it pervades the record, and attentive reading will find it, but it does not emerge in succinct and pointed

form, to arrest the attention and fire the imagination of ignorant and indifferent people. In the Gospel according to St. John, and in St. John's Epistles yet more, we find that, for one of the Apostles who had gone through that experience, as he looked back years later, his belief can concentrate itself in a few pregnant and challenging sentences, such as a preacher could use ever after. So far as substantial doctrine is concerned, it requires a great exercise of theological pedantry to find any other difference than this.

But may not the earlier Gospels have been edited and doctored so as to express the like doctrine with St. John? We do not know all about the channels along which the materials of their record have come through to us, but we see plainly what sort of materials they originally were, and we can see how two of the editors, St. Luke and the author of the first Gospel, each with his own peculiarity, worked upon these. They included staple teaching of our Lord's, cast in a form meant to be remembered and actually very hard to forget; they include incidents and conversations of an equally unforgettable kind. All this is worked into the course of a brief, vivid, fragmentary story which illustrates how our Lord's ministry led the Apostles on to that determining crisis in their lives when they recognize Him as the Christ, and which gives thereafter the most salient memories of the closing scenes of His life. If such materials had been touched up by successive editors so as to make the whole give a false impression, the falsifying hand would have left its clear traces, not only by the apparent introduction of an explanatory gloss of an unimportant kind here and there but — as is the case in certain books of the Old Testament — by creating over and over again a repugnancy of a vital kind between some one passage in the Gospels and some other.

As it is, one subtle, consistent current of thought can be seen running through the whole; and, this being so, the very fact that this record came from various sources and has passed through various hands makes it idle to doubt that it truly represents our Lord.

Through several chapters past we have assumed for the sake of argument that the Gospel according to St. John is not to be reckoned an historical authority. But, in truth, the proof that the Synoptic Gospels are trustworthy as to the matter in question is supported by the whole added weight of the evidence that this Gospel is in the same matter trustworthy too.

The matter might be left here, but I have so far spoken only incidentally of the direct evidence to be found in the New Testament about the actual development which the Church and its beliefs did undergo. That evidence is largely to be found in the Epistles of St. Paul, of which the earliest and the most necessary for our purpose are by far the earliest complete books in the New Testament. If the evidence told a tale which conflicted at all with what has so far been said, we should be forced to suspect that the Gospels had somehow led us astray. But this is very far from being the case, and in what follows I need not occupy myself much with the foregoing controversy, but may rather think of how the whole story of the New Testament should really be read.

I shall not be tempted to range wide over the whole field of those thoughts which necessarily soon began to exercise the first Christians. I shall scarcely glance at that doctrine of the Holy Spirit which our teachers (may I say?) have done but little to make real to us, or at the question — now a very practical question — of the Church, so diversely interpreted as "the blessed company of all faithful people" and as (in political language) "the

machine." I have pursued up to now a single line of thought, and so far as that is concerned there are, I think, only a few further comments on the New Testament story that are necessary.

Much becomes plain when we once reflect that in the New Testament ideas which had at first been addressed to Jewish minds, in Jewish terms already in use, are in process of translation into terms which are to have a meaning for men in any country and in any after time. Thus it is that "the Christ" (or "the Messiah"), a title descriptive of an office or position,—the obvious title by which, so to speak, to rally Jews to our Lord's standard,—was, according to St. Luke, freely used by St. Peter at the first, along with reference to the servant of God foretold in Isaiah liii, and to the "prophet like unto" himself whom Moses had foretold. But in St. Paul and in the Epistles of St. Peter himself there is no longer a title, "the Christ," but as with ourselves, a personal name, "Christ," alternating with "Jesus Christ" or "Christ Jesus." The retention of the word with an altered meaning is a sign of St. Paul's strong sense at once of continuity with old Judaism and of great advance upon it. At the same time the phrase, "Son of God," comes into use. He who could speak of God as His Father in a special sense was not for a while spoken of by those who believed in Him as (in a corresponding sense) the Son of God; there was special reason for insisting first that He was the Messiah, and "Son of God" might have passed as mere language of praise, not asserting any peculiar relation to God. Used among people who belonged to the Hellenistic world, the words "Son of God" would have been more arresting and were likely to convey a more definite meaning; they would not necessarily have suggested to a Greek, any more than to a Jew, that literal paternity was

meant, for the classical myths with which we are familiar had little hold on people's minds; but they were bound to suggest the close resemblance which may exist between father and son,[1] the partaking of the son in his father's nature. Thus we read in Hebrews that our Lord was "the express image" of the Father's "person." There is necessarily a slight uncertainty about any explanation of how such a transition came about. But the sort of consideration to which I have just called attention is enough to dispel the idea that the change in terminology about our Lord has anything suspicious about it.

Further, let us recall that the Apostles themselves had known our Lord very well, in the fullest sense of personal acquaintance. They continued long with the recollection of that acquaintance fresh, and with the impressions, tragic beyond words and full beyond words of joy and glory, of how their days with Him had ended. It is from this fact of their personal intercourse with Him, their personal love and personal parting, that the whole history of Christian belief starts. Now, we do not analyze or classify or put into categories those whom we thus know or knew recently; nor do we pause to measure up exactly events of great sorrow or delight. When He and the disciples parted (let us, if we wish, assume that what they thought real was not real), the thought that He whom they had seen crucified still lived could not possibly have left room for the vaguer and vaster thought that His being must be such as involved His having existed from eternity. One definite thought was enough for the purpose of what they must say to all

[1] For example, in Plato, *Rep.*, *506 E and 508 B and C*, "Offspring of" means almost the same as "most like to"; and (to paraphrase a little disrespectfully) "the Good begat the sun for me to make use of in this analogy." The Hellenistic thinking world had very little notion of what Plato was about, but it used his language all the more freely.

Jerusalem: He was indeed the long-looked-for Messiah, the heir of David, the coming One whom under various names Moses and the prophets had foretold. To the person whom they thus described they gave without any limitation, as they had given while He was with them, all the trust and all the allegiance possible. He was to them "the captain of life," a conception to which, provided it was entertained fully and in earnest, nothing could really be added.

But to these serious men the time was bound to come when they would, so to speak, stand back a little in thought from the personal image that was so living to them, asking themselves more explicitly what He meant to them, asking themselves, too, what His death meant. Why did He die? They had to preach Him and explain Him to men who had never seen and had heard little of Him. What was He to mean for strangers as well as for themselves? And then there came into action the minds of new believers, men who had never known Him at all or at the utmost had only had a vision of Him. These men must in a way define Him adequately to themselves. Peter could think of Jesus as of one that he had known. Paul, with no less intensity of emotion, must form that distinctly intellectual conception which he had the intellectual power to form.

We must soon return to the plain enough results of this, but we have struck here upon the great preliminary difficulty which for many of us involves the whole history in perplexity. To me, at any rate, it was a standing puzzle, from childhood, that our Lord's actual disciples were content for several years to preach to Jews alone — nay, that Jesus Himself confined His mission strictly to Jews, and Christianity took the mighty stride which made us Christians chiefly at the compulsion of a masterful

man who had never been a disciple of Jesus. After all, however passionately Paul may declare the contrary, did he not make a new religion which was not the religion of Jesus, since in this vital respect its spirit seems so different? Destructive criticism of the New Testament owes its plausibility not to its peddling points about the terms and even the metaphors of doctrine, nor to its childlike surprise when some Syrian inscription or Egyptian papyrus reveals that men of different races and creeds have had thoughts in common, but to this, which is a real puzzle to ordinary readers. Yet our difficulty is an illusion, which disappears the moment that we realize what was the work which the Apostles were doing in those early years, how it was related to what was to follow, how it was related to what we must conceive was the purpose of our Lord.

The expansion of Christianity into a religion for all nations meant to Paul, and meant to Peter too, the calling of men "from the ends of the earth" into a community, the Israel of God, which after centuries of discipline and preparation had been purified, transfigured, and raised to a higher power by the coming of the Christ and by its acceptance of Him. A large part of the actual Jewish community which had endured that discipline so long did not in fact accept Him, but, as our Lord had foretold in parables, were themselves cast out, while other men were coming to take their place with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It was a tragic fact to Paul when he was "turning to the Gentiles"; the Epistle to the Romans rings with the tragedy. It had a glorious side, with which the Epistles to the Colossians and Ephesians ring, in that Christ had "broken down the middle wall of partition" (the barrier, for crossing which a Gentile was punishable with death, that separated the inner court of

the Temple from the outer), and from the point of view of Christian men abolished all those other differences between races and classes of men which from any other point of view seem fundamental. It was a fact which the fourth Evangelist looked back upon with indignation against the rejected men who had themselves rejected Christ, and with the fiery patriotism of the old Israel wholly transferred to the new. By Peter and his comrades in the early days such an expansion of Christianity had not yet been contemplated as likely; but in the Acts a clearer consciousness of their actual position in the drama of history is imputed to them. Peter declares: "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his servant,[1] sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities."

Toward this great transformation of a religion (in the first instance) for Jews into one chiefly (as it turned out) attracting Gentiles, the point of view of St. Peter before the event, of St. Paul while the chief agent in it, and of St. John or his follower looking back upon it, is fundamentally the same.

The stages of progress marked in the Acts are very natural. Peter and his colleagues had at first no idea of any breach with the law and the worship of their fathers. Stephen was appointed to see to needs arising out of the presence in Jerusalem of people who had lived outside Palestine, and was, presumably, himself one of them; at any rate, he looked at Jerusalem in relation to the

[1] There can be little doubt that "servant," not "son," is the right translation, or that the reference is to God's servant in Isaiah liii, where, in the Septuagint, the same word is used.

world, and his talk seemed to the Jews to be full of menace. Stephen declared that neither the temple worship nor anything equally local was of the essence of that religious tradition which started with Abraham in Mesopotamia, and from him came down through Moses in Egypt and a succession of prophets — with the bulk of the people who were privileged to listen to Moses and those prophets kicking at that religion all the time. Paul, who had been prominent among those whom Stephen offended, was after his conversion only gradually led to appeal to Gentiles by his experiences as a missionary in Jewish colonies abroad. Meanwhile, the Christians in Jerusalem, hearing that Peter had preached to some Gentiles, "glorified God." There seems to have been a natural expectation that some day "the Gentiles shall come to thy light," before it began to appear that it was anybody's special business to fetch them. The one stage passed into the other gradually; converts were welcome, as proselytes to Judaism had been welcome.

No trouble, no sense of violent transition arose till the fact broke upon the Church that multitudes were accepting the Christ, the Jewish Messiah, who could not possibly be expected to accept circumcision or almost any other ceremonial requirement of that law of Moses which, for the first Christians, had been the very "schoolmaster to bring [them] to Christ." It was not till this crisis had come, with its urgent demand for the thinking-out of principles, that the question what the mission of our Lord, His death, His very being, really meant, could have been fully faced by any man, or even recognized as of equal importance with a question about provision for widows.

If this preliminary stage (which has seemed so unaccountable) had never been, is it too much to say that Christianity must by now have been extinct or else worthless?

We can conceive that a cult of Jesus Christ, with some interesting doctrine about Him, might have spread far in the world of Greece and Rome — a cult a good deal purer than that of Attis and a good deal less exacting than that of Mithras. What did spread was a way of life, which had been quietly practised till its spirit had grown very deep into the characters of many men and women, the life of a community which, at least in its persecuted prime, was held together by an intenser mutual loyalty than that of any other fellow citizens. This new sense of brotherhood and the spirit of the simplest precepts of Jesus Christ had to be learned in an unambitious way by the Church before Christianity would be worth spreading.

Nor must we forget that the Christian Church had to start as a Church of true Jews, steeped in what had seemed to the prophets the one true principle of Judaism. That principle was one which made morality and religion the same; God was a God of righteousness. This and the truth that He was one and not many were, as we like St. Paul can see, really inseparable thoughts. By a long, hard, forging process the minds of many Jews had been made firm in this belief, when Jesus came and to some of these Jews gave a new meaning to the law which they struggled to obey, and a new power of fulfilling it. Now we cannot too much emphasize the fact that in the Gentile world neither the full righteousness of God nor His oneness was a recognized part of any widely preached or generally acknowledged religion; the latter, indeed, was a principle which the men who held it most firmly for themselves might have hesitated the most to proclaim in a manner which would have disturbed seriously the polytheistic beliefs of common people. In that age the name of Jesus Christ might have been spread abroad in such a

way that for common people He would have taken rank among gods and demigods in a commodious Pantheon, while some refined persons wove Him into the nightmare schemes in which philosophic minds (when not robustly infidel) took pleasure. This is not a fancy. Even at so early a date as St. Paul's later Epistles, and much more in the next few generations, we can see that the Church had a fringe to it in which this was happening. It may not sound shocking to us, but it would certainly have meant the loss of that driving power in the direction of the highest righteousness which was the unique feature of Christianity among the creeds that could appeal to ordinary minds. As it was, Christianity entered into the Hellenistic and into the Roman world resolutely demanding of common people that they should forsake their idols to serve the living God, Who inexorably demanded righteousness, and Who was One. The history of the prophets, which must sometimes strike us as an age-long repetition of aspiration, delusion, and failure, had really resulted in a Judaism which stood alone in the world, demanding this of its own people. It is certain that Christianity, as we understand it and as Jesus meant it to be if He meant anything, could never have gone further if there had not first been formed a compact and devoted body of men who accepted the Christ while they remained (and because they remained) Jews through and through. This is what was accomplished in the years before Paul and Barnabas began the great move forward. Incidentally we can now understand why St. Paul and the puzzled and hesitating man with whom for a while he had difficulties were in the memory of the next generation inseparably associated as the two great Apostles, as if their work were one.

And now, was their joint work in accordance with the

design of Jesus of Nazareth? We are to ask that question here without any doctrinal prepossession. Apart from any Christian belief in Him, we shall, I think, have to ask ourselves whether He was one of those excellent and interesting historical personages about whom it is an affectation to get excited now, or whether He was very great indeed; and it is impossible to study the Gospels at all closely without at least inclining to the latter alternative. At any rate, He was not one of those men who have taken pains to light fires without its occurring to them that they would spread. When He set Himself to work to make a great change in Judaism; when He made men see the whole sum of the law in the spirit of actively doing good; when He taught them to love and imitate a Father who was perfect in kindness, and unheeded by whom not one sparrow fell; when He set the brand of His scorn upon the question, "Who is my neighbor," He was aware that the new Jerusalem which He was creating would no longer be merely Jerusalem. The prophets to whom He appealed had looked forward to the day when a purified Israel should give a light gladly accepted by the nations round. The popular idea of the "kingdom," which He seized upon, involved either the conversion of the Gentiles or their enslavement. Unless He was stupid, He must have thought of the Gentiles, and unless He was bad, He must have cared about them. That He contemplated their conversion is thus certain.

We must go a step further: When He said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" and acted strictly upon that principle as we are told He did, He deliberately, with a great design in view, took the only course by which in fact other lost sheep could have been gathered into His fold. In this cardinal respect Paul was, as he claimed, an Apostle of Christ and nothing else.

To return to the growth of thought and beliefs: People who study the New Testament with a wish to learn from it may easily find there a real development that meant the fuller understanding of what the salient facts and the simple teaching present in the Gospels did enfold. They may find also that different Christian writers, looking at the whole matter from different points of view and with different powers of vision, each imperfect, did write very different books, but were all the same, as they passionately felt themselves to be, in the presence of the same truth.

It has often been noticed about St. Paul that he refers very little to express teaching of our Lord's. In letters written with intense concentration upon their particular purpose this is perhaps not so remarkable as the wonderful expositions which those letters do contain of the whole spirit of our Lord's teaching. Yet I think perhaps Paul would rather not have fastened his readers' attention very closely upon the letter of any precepts, even our Lord's. He had escaped from the bondage of the law. In any case we must remark in his Epistles the insistence with which he recurs to the thought of the Cross. If we may judge from the early chapters of the Acts and from St. John, the attention of men who had been our Lord's actual companions, "beginning from the baptism of John unto the day that he was received up" from them, was not so much concentrated upon that single point. "Unto the Jews," St. Paul says, the Cross was "a stumblingblock." It might well be a stumblingblock that the anointed heir of David's glory should die as a felon; and we may take it that it had been so to St. Paul. May we not clearly gather one thing about that revulsion of ideas which suddenly came upon him? To all his after thought the glory not of David but of God stood revealed in that

death. For every Christian now this central thought of Paul's is present in the short story which — perhaps largely from St. Peter's lips — St. Mark set down.

One chief element in that thought is equally conspicuous in the earliest teaching attributed to St. Peter, in his own Epistle long after, in St. Paul, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, in St. John's Epistles and in the Gospel which fairly bears his name — conspicuous in slightly varying forms which need hide from no one the identity of the root idea. Jesus Christ had brought "remission of sins." One fact here needs to be noted by modern readers. In the various phrases used in the Epistles and the Acts in this connection the idea of letting men off a punishment which might justly have been inflicted is seldom if ever prominent; perhaps indeed it is never very distinctly present except in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the argument is that the sacrificial system of the Jews has served its purpose and can go. To an extent which it may be worth anyone's while to seek out for himself, the point of these passages is that the burden of the sins themselves is taken away. The horror of inability to be righteous as the law required righteousness, which was so strongly felt by some of the Psalmists and had been so strongly felt by St. Paul, is gone. This is no less evident in the early speeches in the Acts (an equally trustworthy expression of feeling that is not exactly Pauline[1] whether St. Peter spoke them or not) than it is in St. Paul: "turning away every one of you from his iniquities" is the "blessing" brought by God's servant who, according to the prophet referred to, had been "smitten for our iniquities." Repentance and

[1] It is often said that the writer of the Acts shows no great understanding of St. Paul's ideas. This is not in the least incompatible with the friendship and mutual appreciation of the two men, and it is mere ignorance of human nature to argue as if it were.

remission of sins are a single transaction. If we ask how these men related in their minds what to modern thought, with its abstracting tendency, seem two transactions, we may read again the parable of the Prodigal Son, and think whether, on the actual return home of that character,— if he had anything in him,— his single, all-absorbing thought would not have been the ending of an appalling loneliness and estrangement, to which any material gains would have been merely incidental.

If we further ask just how Jesus Christ effected the ending of that estrangement between God and man, we might open up a field of speculation, largely useful, which neither our own minds nor those of the Apostles could quite adequately explore. It was not simply by teaching that He did it. St. Paul's main thought is fairly clear to us. The impossible task of living unerringly by a multitude of exacting rules is not what God can any longer be thought to lay on us, certain though it is, to Paul and to us, that rules have had their use. He asks for lives increasingly governed by that trust in Him and love of Him (love that would gladly share any sacrifice of self) which the revelation of Him in His Son makes no less possible to us than is any natural affection. St. Paul wrestles in argument to make plain this feeling which is burning in him. In the earlier utterances of the Acts it is implicit. It runs through the writings of St. John as something familiar from the first. It is easy for us to grasp, in a way, how faith in Christ is felt to "justify" men;[1] we shall however miss a vital part of what all these writers mean if we overlook their intense convic-

[1] There are few better bits of exposition of Romans than that which may be found in Matthew Arnold's *Saint Paul and Protestantism*, dealing with this subject. T. H. Green's lay sermon on "Faith," (and also the preceding one on "The Witness of God,") reprinted in Vol. III of his works, is a memorable utterance on the subject. It will be remembered that neither of these authorities can possibly be classed as "orthodox."

tion, however we interpret it, that the saving force is the gift of God in Christ, which man may accept and go on accepting. We may or may not be able to interpret their language fully to ourselves; what we can easily discover is that the central thoughts, which become fuller and more explicit in the development which we witness, retain their substantial identity from first to last.

Many appreciably different ways of looking at the same matter can be found among the writers of the New Testament. The single source from which they all draw inspiration becomes, I believe, unmistakable upon careful reading. I will compare but two. No books could, in a way, differ more than the Epistle of St. John and that of St. James (not John's brother James). In St. John all moral teaching is concentrated into passionate insistence on the single thought of love, and this single master-principle of life is for him not so much proof of or consequence of, as one with the doctrine which he reiterates (almost with fury), that Jesus is the Son of God. St. James is, in an utterly different way, as unmistakably a Jew as St. John. His morality is on the whole the simplest and best morality of the Old Testament prophets. He was probably that head of the Church in Jerusalem whose special adherents were so troublesome to St. Paul, but who himself, when St. Paul was coming for the last time to Jerusalem, devised — being a great gentleman — a proceeding for St. Paul to take which should be entirely agreeable to his own cast of thought and which yet might commend him to his bitter antagonists. The beautiful pages of James do not dwell upon any central principle of life, and we might be tempted to say that they contain no word of doctrine; yet the single phrase, "the perfect law of liberty," contains the pith of St. Paul's teaching about works and faith. There

are actually only two sentences in which James thinks it necessary to mention Jesus Christ by name. The first is the opening verse, in which he announces himself as the "servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ." The second is this: "My brethren, hold not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons." Much has been written most sincerely of late by men who are, so to speak, doctrinally minded in the highest degree, about the very practical bearing of the Incarnation upon social questions. We can see here how the same thought possessed a writer who has often been taken as the exponent of the extreme opposite tendency to the doctrine-making of Paul and of the Johannine books. And a little reflection upon this very pregnant saying of that writer is as good a way as any to understand why to St. John an intense belief in what we call a dogma has become the driving force of life, and why, conversely, love of God or of Jesus or of man seems to him to compel that belief.

This is a sufficient example of those differences of temperament, and consequently of point of view, with which the same idea is presented to us in the New Testament by different men. The differences continue to this day, and it is curious that they are closely comparable now to those which we can see in the beginning. As St. Paul said, "there are diversities of gifts but the same Spirit." So too with the growth which we have observed. The revolutionary change which some men have fancied they could trace is — with that form of outside influence to which they have attributed it — a myth. The fact is that an idea, present at the beginning, unfolded with riper thought.

It would be superfluous to labor further for the purpose of indicating the place which the Fourth Gospel takes

in the marvelously ordered whole of the New Testament; it might indeed be a little worse than superfluous — it might be displeasing; and I venture to say why. It could not easily be done without giving to many readers a keener feeling than exposition of other Scripture does, that the commentator is handling something which they wish he would let alone.[1] For there are two ways and two ways only in which Chapters xiii to xvii (and of course some other passages) of this Gospel can affect a reader. He may read them with indifference, or with the inclination to suppose them a fabrication, or he may read them with the feeling that he is here brought nearer than anywhere else to the presence of Jesus Christ. That doctrine of His Sonship and of His unity with the Father, which has been thought to prove that this scene is unauthentic, may elsewhere be discussed coolly as a doctrine. Here, if the thread of the discourse is once observed, it comes to us as a part of the mind of Christ in contemplation of death.

To make one last comment which for a moment may seem a paradox: It remains to be said that the view of His person which is here made part of our Lord's inmost thought — and set forth in what in other ways is a wonderfully real scene — happens to be the most rational view of the matter which can be traced in early belief, or which from the evidence before us we can possibly attribute to Him. Certainly He thought Himself and was taken by all His followers to be in some fundamental respect different from all other men. We can more or less reconstruct the sort of conceptions which people at that time might form of Him — as the Messiah of Jewish

[1] But I cannot say this without adding that this difficult thing has been done in one book which cannot be too widely known or too often read. Hart's *The Way, the Truth, and the Life* (Macmillan & Co.) is a great classic of religious literature.

apocalyptic, as a demigod, as an emanation, or what not. Any one of these conceptions might, so far as we can see, have come to prevail within New Testament times, if it had corresponded at all to what His unphilosophic disciples really felt to have been His mind. And all of those conceptions are absurd from our point of view, since we possess some real knowledge with which we feel that they conflict, and with a little effort we could explain that they do conflict. But if we use words with meaning, we cannot say that it is absurd to think of Jesus of Nazareth as, according to St. John, He did think of Himself. We may say that we do not understand the doctrine; that it conveys no definite meaning to us; that it is vastly improbable; or that it does not interest us; but we cannot pretend to ourselves that we have any knowledge about God, or man, or the world, or Jesus, which proves it untrue.

To conclude: I have written this book with a critical purpose, and in the process of writing it have — at least in my own mind — maintained unremittingly the spirit of search; and I confidently state the result as one which scientific history should soon come to accept as settled, regardless of its effect upon religion. Apart from the historical value of the Fourth Gospel in other respects, it appears that one section of it in an especial degree was the portrayal of the actual Jesus as John knew Him. It has presented itself as a difficulty that the doctrine there attributed to Jesus was not His but the product of influences quite remote from Him. It appears now that this cannot be so. Make of it what we may, Jesus Christ of Nazareth did think and did speak as according to St. John He thought and spoke concerning His Father, Himself, His followers, and that Spirit of His which should abide with them forever.

XVI

EPILOGUE

I HAVE finished with the proper subject of my book. But, as I have studied this problem of mere criticism confessedly and obviously without having had, when I first began, any fixed theological opinions, it would be not modest but cowardly if I did not add what occurs to me now upon those ulterior questions apart from which criticism would be a dreary pastime.

Those questions present one vast, connected problem of seemingly endless complexity. No wise man thinks any longer that he can offer an intellectual and systematic solution of the problem, complete, certain, and clear. It is wise, in the first place, to keep to the uttermost a fresh and open mind — open, not in the sense that it will not learn what it can learn, but in that it is ready to learn more. And further, it is best to be interested in the riddle of the world chiefly as it concerns our business for the day. There are indeed some few philosophic people to whom the concentrated study of some portion of the problem offers an honest life's work like another. "Mais il faut cultiver notre jardin." Gradually, in the dim or dazzling prospect, the outlines grow clearer at one or two points, — not necessarily the same points for different eyes, — and then at further points. From a very early stage we may cease to worry over the thought that the whole outline will probably never be quite clear.

I shall without further apology try to say several things which I think strongly, confining myself on the whole to the things of which I have longest felt certain.

I start from an observation which happens to have forced itself upon me long ago, regardless of such principles as I should probably have then professed. Toward any great man, alive or dead, except our Lord, the attitude of discipleship is unreasonable and unmanly; toward our Lord, as from a simple reading of the Gospels we all more or less conceive of Him, some sort of unaffected discipleship appears, as we go on in life, the only reasonable or manly attitude. As to great men generally, sane and wholesome hero-worship always grows up (as a nice child's respect and love for parents does) with a pretty clear and probably amused perception of their weaknesses, and without much inclination, except in little ways or for a little while, to model our lives upon theirs. The attempt to work up a cult of some national hero is an insult to the memory of a man who, if he was great, must have had some foundation of simplicity and humility. In the case of our Lord the analogy goes only a little way. There can certainly be strained attempts to work up an emotional state in regard to Him which will at the best be transitory. But there are no less certainly many people who have long outgrown the disposition to humbug themselves and are quietly at grips with practical life, but in whom the set desire to follow Jesus Christ has formed itself naturally and half consciously. It may become a very distinct desire indeed. Some people, though they would shrink from putting the fact into words, would have to confess that they never get through their ordinary course of duty efficiently except in a temper that is kept alive in them by the constantly renewed resolve of very humble discipleship to Him. Conversely, they

would own that their periods of lowered purpose and poor performance follow upon the occasional letting go of that resolve. They would say too that in emergencies of special difficulty, even the ordinary emergencies of a trivial kind which occur every few weeks and of which examples would sound ridiculous, their courage, endurance, and prompt command of their wits depend upon the same cause. In some degree this sense that discipleship is His due, and that it is worth the while for ourselves, comes after a time to everybody who has a habit of studying or keeping familiar with the Gospels in a sensible way — that is, passing lightly over what he does not understand, assuming for a reasonable time that what repels him is probably not understood, dwelling on what he does understand and gradually extending it. Of course I am far from saying that every good man is a follower of our Lord in this way. I am not even assuming that sincere Christian conviction always takes the form which I have described. I am saying that Jesus Christ stands before the world as a personality toward whom, and toward whom alone, this simple and wholesome discipleship is possible.

But Christianity may be looked at in quite another light — not as the personal following of a person, but as a principle or spirit of action ; to call it a law or a moral code would evidently be an inadequate description. Regarding it in this light, we evidently must not judge it by any of the religious systems which have plainly been perversions of it, or by the standard of the many partial Christians who are not much influenced by it. I am here speaking of it as it presents itself (with differences among themselves on secondary matters) to those of the best people whom we know who happen also to be Christians. It is of course hard to describe, because it is repugnant

to it to be tied down to a formula. But, clearly, it exalts common affections and duties into a love of God and of man — of a man's nearest and dearest more particularly, but ultimately of all people in proportion as he is concerned with them. Clearly, too, this love is sustained and is kept wholesome and humble by some sense that it is a man's own poor response to God's love of him; also it evidently forbids concentration of one's interests on one's self, one's fortunes, or one's soul. Above all, it is not a mere sentiment, but a driving power.

Such are some of the evident characteristics of the Christian spirit at its best, and one gradually learns that every idea of what is right, honorable, splendid, or worth while which one can lastingly entertain, no matter from what source it may be derived, is, in the very intelligible phrase of the Gospel, fulfilled by this Christian spirit. The sound and lasting element in any healthy aspiration or any ambition worthy of man or woman is seized upon by the spirit of Christ — as real Christians conceive it — and is strengthened. I say one gradually learns, because, of course, it is immensely hard to reconcile one's self in practice to the sacrifice which Christianity inexorably demands of mere self-indulgence or mere greed or mere malignity, in the case of some of our native desires and the creeds and ideals based on them. But we are all quite aware, in cold blood, that sacrifice is going one way or another to be enforced upon us; and considered in cold blood, the bold statement which has just been made needs but very little illustration.

Probably the finest example that could be chosen of a high pattern of life that has arisen apart from Christianity is that conceived by the greatest Greek philosophers in the great age of Greek life. In Plato's *Republic* is a description of the virtues which the real pursuit of truth

will develop in young men brought up to philosophy and to arms, the "athletes of the great game." Few people could read the passage intelligently without being stirred by it, or without seeing that the moral qualities here thought possible for a few specially gifted people are the natural outcome, in some people of quite ordinary gifts, of the simple principles of Christianity, only that in Christianity they take markedly a purer and a stronger form. Or if we look for great patterns not in any formulated system but in the tempers which have prevailed for a while in some races at some times, we may think for a moment of the heroes of Icelandic sagas. There was something so splendid in these outrageous gentry that we had rather their vices survived than that their virtues perished; but they were unlicked cubs; and we can easily imagine that all that was really splendid about them might be enlisted entire in the service of Christ — a thing which has often happened. So it is with whatever deeply stirs our sympathy and whatever carries, by contrast with us, an honestly felt rebuke to ourselves in the better qualities of any race, period, creed, or school. This is not a statement to be hastily taken as proved, but it is one which surely comes home after a while, when we have once fairly realized what in their essence Christian principles are.

Two further remarks arise out of this. In the first place, great perversions of its principles have again and again obscured Christianity; it has sunk into submissiveness to false authority, into a grim system of self-righteousness, into a welter of morbidly emotional conversationalism, and into childish or dark superstitions of the most opposite kinds. Nevertheless, the Christianity of which we are here speaking is not some fanciful ideal. Sober history shows it almost inevitably

submerged by all these things in turn in the course of its struggle to dominate the world, and yet keeping its persistent life and emerging, not without gain, from each dark period. Upon a broad view of its past and its present, the thought arises that, far from being a thing which has served its turn and will make way for some better system, it is very young — the least spent, perhaps the least ripened of the great influences now perceptible in the world. In the second place, it is hard to see what is meant by the Christian preachers who have said of late that it contains no final revelation. That in detail Christian duties look differently now than they did in the first century, that each generation has its own problem to face and its own gains to win ; that there is always much to be learned — all that is obvious enough. But that any principle which Christ implanted needs revising, any more than the multiplication table, is not an illuminating suggestion. Take the principle expressed by St. John in the words, "God is love" (as in the process of thought and experience a man comes to understand that principle), and regard it not on its inscrutable metaphysical side but as a principle which is in some way to govern conduct and education. We cannot really see in it a mere partial expression of truth, which human wisdom will amplify and outgrow. Honest common-sense compels us to think either that it is false — definitely misleading, as it has actually been said to be by philosophies which have had tremendous effect upon the world very recently — or that it is the whole truth, and that there is nothing more to be said about it ever. If we hold it true, we hold it final. And we must also observe that in some sense at least it was revealed in Christ. Thoughts that fit in with it were abundant enough in prophets, sages, and philosophers before Him, but in its plenitude

and its nakedness it took nothing less than the whole life and death of Christ to make it pass in the world as anything but sheer nonsense.

To sum up what has so far been said: It grows upon many open minds as simple and certain fact, that men have had so far but one Master and that He revealed the one Gospel they can ever have.

Meanwhile we all necessarily have thoughts about the world which at the outset seem quite apart from religion or irreligion, thoughts of the kind which it takes a poet to express at all, and a great poet to express in a way that satisfies common men and women. In exact prose one can only point out that what poets try to express is generally something of which common men and women are quite conscious as real. All the greater poets have tried to express something about the all-embracing and continuous life of the world as a whole, a life of the existence of which we seem to be conscious, and toward which we seem bound to take some mental attitude or other, which may have nothing to do with theology. That attitude may be said to begin, normally, in a wonder that is pleasant and rather awful, — not the less pleasant for being awful, — and a sort of sympathy with Nature. With the growth of full physical strength, a happy consciousness of our own vitality normally carries with it some sort of exultant feeling that the world is a glorious place to live in, and the more so because it will go on when we do not. Almost from the first there is some subdued presence of sadness in it, and with the onset of sorrows which we are old enough to feel and of the first real disappointments and disillusionments, the sadness of man's and one's own position in the world prevails with many people. Life becomes to them a thing not to think about; or it may become hauntingly dreary; or

in the case of people with a literary or artistic temperament and nothing to say, a sort of cult of the dismal or the dirty may arise. Still the healthy reaction against the sadness of life and the terror of the world is that which all great tragedy has tried to express — a courage which looks at agony and failure very steadily and fully, and yet finds the world great, and life glorious, and the sorrow in some unaccountable way worth while. It is needless here to try to put more adequately the note that is sounded to everybody by the poetry or the novels of the sterner sort of which he genuinely feels the greatness. (In saying this, one should remember that some people do not read poetry or great fiction, for the excellent reason that they do not need it.) But everyone, as years go on, makes a more or less definite election whether the tragic facts shall make the world seem a dull thing at the best, or whether they shall somehow enhance the beauty and the grandeur that can be found in it — and enhance, it should be added, the sport and the abounding fun. The brave choice is always possible, and the oncoming of age, which in a way must abate personal enjoyments, seems often to add a serenity to the assurance that life is great.

To this paradoxical persuasion, to which normal men cling and of which the great tragedians and the great humorists are in their various ways the prophets, Christianity, as one may come to feel, brings a fresh consistency and force. Its one paradox, the "foolishness" which revealed itself to Paul as the only wisdom, concerns a God (the ruler of this awful world in which fate breaks the strongest and good is won at the cost of error and waste and frightful pain) whose own eternal Being shone once and for all, in all its splendor, before human eyes in the literal human endurance of sorrow and sacrifice as

intense as can ever be the lot of His creatures. Nothing could be gained by speaking further of that strange doctrine, of which the consequences are so strangely apparent to the stupidest minds that are struck by the symbolism of the Cross.

Yet I would say one word about a further Christian doctrine closely associated with this, of which, I think, the force is apt to come home to us slowly. It concerns the forgiveness of sins. I suppose that the word "sin" is one of the many of which the sense has become obscured with repetition, for quite intelligent people have derided the idea. Yet it would be a mental abnormality to be wholly unaware of the fact indicated by the word. Nobody can be healthily alive without having often tingled with impotent rage against himself for something that he has done. Of course this self-anger is often most unforgettable when it relates to some quite trivial awkwardness, and a man will almost blush half a century later about some boyish absurdity which he knows had its respectable side. Yet it is not true to say that we forgive ourselves our graver lapses, our actually foul acts or perhaps fouler omissions. These are things of which, the truth is, we dare not think; doubtless, though it is good for us sometimes to face them steadily, it would not be good for us to think of them often. So far as we do think of them, they are worse in our eyes than they would be in the eyes of our friends or of our enemies either; it is no comfort to know that other people do equally despicable things; and the excuse of circumstances, temperament, and so on, which we would willingly make for other people's faults, would be the worst mortification of our self-esteem if we made it for ourselves.

This is, I am sure, the normal way of thinking for healthy minds, and this is not much less so: the appalling

ease with which we may lose this way of thinking in regard to the particular kind of fault which has become habitual to us. Psychologically there can be no doubt that to see our fault quite steadily, judge it duly, confess to others in those circumstances which make confession fitting, and yet remain unshaken in courage and unmoved by "that impure passion of remorse" is the way of health and sanity. It is usually very hard; yet, one can observe, to sincere Christians it becomes easy.

I frankly confess that I have never clearly understood the doctrine of the Atonement in the New Testament or in modern theologies, but I can at least appreciate that it has a meaning quite remote from such grotesque representations of it as laid hold even on so great a man as Milton. I am sure that the thought of God's forgiveness, as needed by us and as given freely to those who seek it, is one which normally lays hold of those who try to keep mentally and morally alive; I am sure too that we rightly link it with the idea of Christ "who loved us and gave himself for us." Nor, I confess, does it trouble my assurance that on this, as on at least one other great question which I have passed over, I could not frame any more precise statement in terms which would be satisfactory to me.

Something of the same sort I might be able to say about more than one Christian doctrine which I will not here touch. But no man can write or read such reflections as these without becoming all the more aware of questions striking at the roots — not so much, I think, of Christianity in particular as of the beliefs in a good and living God and in immortality, which are not confined to it. May not the mind that is perplexed by them find rest by grasping the certain fact of its own limitations, and then seeking the full significance of such few other things as are

equally certain? A considerable part at least of the doubts that arise about these fundamental beliefs of Christianity are simply due to the boundary, indefinable but inexorable, which shuts in human thought; in other words, equal doubt would assail the opposite beliefs if we once started to take those seriously as things that should govern life. A world ruled by God seems inconceivable — but so does the world anyhow. A good God coëxistent with evil is inconceivable — so too is any goodness that does not pass through strife. And it does not follow that we had best let the thought of God alone. Time is inconceivable; when did it begin? Yet at a certain hour the train will start — at least, at a certain hour the tide will turn. Far more insistent than these metaphysical doubts are some which might seem easier to settle if it were a mere matter of chopping logic. We have most of us had experiences, really terrible at the time, of which we think as gayly now as a schoolboy of a hack at football — nay, for which we do thank God. This is an analogy which may carry us far. But there are agonies of which the actual sufferer will never, while life lasts, feel aught but agony, and it is seemingly the best and bravest hearts that are wounded thus. Weep by all means "with them that weep," but beware how you offer them your facile consolation; beware how you press on them your cheap-bought faith in God. Here I will merely say that there is a mystery of pain before which faith staggers.

It is nevertheless right to say that amiable and clever people have entertained objections to religion of a sort which verge upon being ludicrous, for they rest upon the assumption that what can be should be cut to the measure of their understanding; the demand that what the world calls incomprehensible ought at least to be "explained to

a gentleman like me." Grave instructors of the last generation have told young Christians that their creed was exploded by the Copernican system of astronomy — it could last only so long as the earth was thought the centre of the universe, with the other planets and the fixed stars with their probable planets as tiny luminaries going round it. Their idea may have been that so small a planet as the earth could be no object of interest to a mind which, though supposed omniscient, had many larger worlds to attend to. Or they may only have meant that serious Christian theology purported to be an exhaustive account of all the workings of God's mercy. Either of these would be rather a foolish thought. So too it is somewhat infantile, though natural, when we ask, at times, What is Heaven? It is contemptible when people ask sarcastically whether the saints will be forever playing the harp, or forever attending a round of philanthropic committees. The simple remark that "I speak as a child" or that I "see through a glass, darkly" deprives of all logical force those objections to Christianity which come from mere dissatisfaction with the fact that we know little. Questions here throng in upon me: What real meaning do I give to immortality? Where are the dead? What are the dealings of God's mercy with such intelligences as probably dwell in the other planets, far off? What are those dealings with animals so near akin to us; with my own dog who loved me so; with animals further removed from us? How is the soul related to the body? What becomes of its continuous life in those strange cases of interrupted consciousness, even of divided personality, of which we hear, and in the more familiar and more awful case of madness? And so on. "What is that to thee? Follow thou me."

There is, therefore, a strong temptation to disregard

intimations and hints that we receive, because they come in the midst of a cloud of problems which are insoluble to us, but which have no bearing whatever upon anything that we have to do to-day. But it seems that is a temptation to be set aside. I may have more to say upon that point, but here I will at once avow the effect upon my own mind of sundry thoughts which I have in part indicated above, though only in part. I have been more or less revolving them in my mind at intervals during many years; and whether it be reasonable or not, it is in fact the consequence of this that I find myself, somewhat to my surprise, a very ordinary Christian in my beliefs. It has ceased to be a matter of doubt with me that there is a living God, and simultaneously with the passing of that doubt I have come to believe that the nature of that living God was revealed to man in Jesus Christ. I make this personal confession, not from any liking for confessions, but because I feel sure that countless others have passed through the same stages of thought. They would differ in the explicitness of their convictions; some would have been more impressed by one point and some by another; the experiences of no two would coincide exactly; but in the general upshot the similarity would be far greater than the dissimilarity. Perhaps an equal or larger number of Christians have at no particular time felt their whole religious belief to be matter of doubt. They have found out early that the faith in which they had been brought up made them better; conscience has prompted them clearly to take it as a whole and be loyal to it; the exact meaning of and evidence for this or that detail of doctrine has not struck them as a question that concerned them greatly, nor have any of those speculative puzzles which they know could be raised about it all. Such a position is no sign of any lack in intellectual

power or in intellectual honesty. There are people of this kind, and there are people of an opposite kind, who have a strong impulse of inquiry and who like to travel through life with the smallest possible amount of baggage in the way of fixed general principles. Neither kind has any call to envy or to pity the other. And the difference between them is less than it might seem. One goes through a certain sort of reflection and experience before he definitely accepts a belief; another goes through substantially the same before what he accepted in reasonable deference to that which reasonably seemed authority acquires in all respects meaning and point for him. Each, in a rather different way, is coming up against the mysterious world of reality.

I have to underline one point which might be overlooked in the foregoing remarks. I must face the question whether the sort of mental process which I have indicated as leading men to Christianity is really a reasonable one. For the most part what I shall further say relates to thoughts and influences which make Christianity hard to accept.

The sort of conviction which I have stated involves a decided breach with a tendency of thought discernible now among religious as well as non-religious writers, in regard to what is called the "supernatural." It is better to recognize this breach, though the point is hard to put accurately. The Bible is full of alleged miraculous occurrences, about which we can now understand how easily they might have been believed to happen when they did not happen. Sometimes, when we might get over their mere unlikelihood, we cannot so easily get over the likelihood that they should have been falsely believed. This demands (on the part of people who are drawn to the subject) a skeptical attitude about a group of questions

upon which, for two reasons, I shall say no more. They are in some of their aspects novel and it has been hardly possible that they should yet be calmly and adequately weighed up. On the other hand, I make bold to say that they are far less important than controversialists on either side make out.

But a more pressing question lies behind. It is often said that God works by law. This sounds reasonable. But it seems often to be implied that He works only by the sort of law of which by scientific observation we can win some precise knowledge — knowledge which we may expect (say) in a century or so to be fitted neatly into the same scheme with our knowledge of physics and of biology, and knowledge of that demonstrable kind of which the proof is plain to clever and educated men and which only stupid or ignorant men are apt to reject. This is, I think, a very common assumption. Surely, however, when once it is clearly stated and steadily contemplated, it must be seen to be quite unwarrantable. It rests upon two facts: that people in many ages and countries have been credulous about miracles, and that there is a very wide — and widening — field of phenomena within which a startling amount of exact and ordered knowledge has now been and is being obtained. But the gap between these data and the conclusion thus drawn seems a very wide one. Anyhow, Christian belief is incompatible with that conclusion. Of course it does not suppose the existence of different orders of being or different classes of phenomena such that complete or ideal knowledge would be unaware of their true relation to one another. But it does suppose the truth and the importance for us of facts which (for any practical purpose of our own) we must treat as quite remote from the realm of working physical science — still further remote, it may

be well to add, from the realm of the "occult." This supposition is involved when we believe in any dealing of God with man or with the human race which is remotely analogous to a good man's dealings with other men, and which is not analogous to any dealings which so far as we are aware He has (say) with crystals; any seeking by Him of man's soul, or response of His to man's search.

If in any proper sense we believe that Jesus Christ brought a culminating revelation of God to man, which had long been led up to, or again if we believe that man can by prayer put himself into some peculiar and direct relation to God's will, we accept the supernatural, as it seems to me, in a manner to which the whole strong tendency of which I have spoken runs counter. If we believe that "God is love," we believe that which a vast accumulation of facts of science tends to make at first sight highly improbable. It is best to face all this quite frankly.

I am all the more bound to ask whether the kind of process by which I have described many minds (including my own) as brought to Christianity is a rational process, or is it, rather, a gradual giving way to some irrational sentiment or emotion. Nobody need suppose for a moment that it is an instance of believing a thing because it would be pleasant to believe it. A modern Englishman of mature years, with a healthy body and abundant interests in life, is most unlikely to worry much — as in former times, I suppose, many people have done — about what will happen to his own little soul at death, or to be greatly drawn to speculations or dreams which he might reasonably be rid of. Life to the last, and almost at the worst, is rich in sources of happiness ("There's a wind on the heath, brother," the atheist gipsy said, when asked how he would feel if he were old and blind); and as for its

sorrows, the "consolations of religion" vamped up for the purpose would avail little against any great grief. Those of the most genuine religion do not seem necessarily to abate its poignancy. As a matter of fact, I expect that a nervous craving to keep one's religious faith as a rule intensifies every religious doubt; nor do I believe that sensible men are often led to accept Christianity without a strong impulse to be dead honest and to deal with true facts only. Still, even if I had presented far more ably than I could and far more fully than I would the line of thought which I have faintly indicated, I think that many readers would have said: This does suggest that Christianity is useful and salutary to the highest life of those who happen to believe it; so it may be; but its truth, in fact, is quite another matter, which demands a distinct sort of proof.

This raises a very deep question, on which, nevertheless, it may be possible to say quite briefly something which is philosophically sound and which, with reasonable attention, will be intelligible.

There certainly cannot be any proof of Christianity in the sense in which facts in issue must be proved in a law court, or in the somewhat different sense in which facts certainly known to science can be proved. This of course is equally true (though very young people or very uneducated people may imagine otherwise) of any philosophy which would necessitate the rejection of Christianity, or of any general view not claiming to be a regular philosophy, which involves the same consequence. It is true also even of such an assertion as that we cannot know, or that it does not matter. If there could be, in this sense, proof of Christianity or of any of these other opinions, there would not now be honest, capable, and well-informed men who reject that proof. And in the case of

any religious belief this is not at all a sad fact. The abstract information that God had been discovered would in itself be as useless a piece of information as we could possess. Indeed, religious history shows that the quite complacent acceptance on authority of this dogma and some that may easily be accepted with it may be far worse than useless. Obviously the conviction that God exists can be useful to anybody only by reason of some profound reaction of awe and of love which it produces in his mind. And here one may notice the impressive fact that in some minds the inquiry about God or about the world seems to be the effective thing — not the definite and profound conclusion; so much so that great atheists or agnostics have sometimes borne a curious sort of family resemblance to great teachers, whatever may be the case with their followers.

The apprehension of God — and of cognate truths to which I need not recur — is really a part, even if it be thought a superfluous and fallacious part, of a most mysterious process of apprehending the real world, in which every human mind goes some distance. At a very early stage, perhaps not the earliest but long before memory begins, every child gets some working idea of space, material objects, its own body, and so on. If you think of the process of sensations, affections (one rapidly passing into another) of eye, ear, touch, sense of muscular movement, taste, and smell, with a closely related process of appetite accompanying it all, in which the whole thing began; and then if you wonder how you first conceived the notions that you saw a thing, wanted it, could put out your hand and so perhaps take it, you feel as if you must by then have done something comparable to the hugest scientific inference ever performed by any grown-up sage; you really know about it only that this

inconceivable feat has for countless years been instinctive and inevitable.

The instinctive process of learning merges more and more after a while into a consciously rational process; the merger is again a thing which seems to defy analysis; only it does always happen and it is never quite complete. Simultaneously, though in most people much less complete, the appetite side of the business (the reaction of the muscles and the soul to an empty or full state of belly and the like) is merging into the exercise of deliberate will — a thing so imperfect in some men as to result in little more than a habit of painful and disastrous hesitation. Comparing ourselves with more instinctive animals who are also more the creatures of appetite, we see that on both sides the change brings greater risks of error and far greater chances of achievement. (Of this the most momentous example is, of course, the conversion of reproductive power into a consciously directed means of enjoyment, the basis, as the case may be, of lust or of love.) All the while, moreover, the growing creatures' intercourse with other creatures is developing; their thoughts are being more fully exchanged, their desires conflicting or combining more actively. Up to a certain point most of us are learning much the same things at much the same pace. In later years greater differences have set in. One mind grows mainly in one direction and another in another. One is still going on rapidly, another very slowly or not at all. Most exhibit in some respects surprising limitations. Most might, if we knew, surprise us by the advance made in some particular direction. In some after a time there is, upon the whole, retrogression. Some, though with a certain loss and shrinkage, will on the whole be growing to the end. So long as the process lasts it preserves a

certain continuity with its first beginning. Its first beginning, so far as we can see, must be described as the awaking of the child to the sense of real things or of a real world independent of itself but related to itself. Its progress to the very end must be regarded as the extension and articulation, very irregularly and intermittently, of that same sense of a vast, real world related to him.

Now let us glance for a moment at the huge and ordered store of knowledge, chiefly of what we may call the material universe, which is now the common possession of civilized mankind; no individual possesses it all, and most of us possess only a very little of it. After a pause of many centuries, the coöperation of many men and the leadership of a comparatively few men of great intellect (and as a rule of saintly disinterestedness) have within the last dozen generations achieved results which are dazzling to contemplate. Much of the knowledge now possessed about the constitution of matter and about organic life is of a kind which an unlearned person, like myself, can take in, if at all, only by a violent disturbance of his ordinary ways of imagining the world, and of a kind which, at first hearing, he may be inclined to say could never be known. Yet (subject of course to correction in part) it is known; for it is the consistent putting together of innumerable observed facts, and it works when tested by application in practice. All this amazing knowledge is the further and further extension of the child's process of apprehending reality — an extension which can manifestly proceed more rapidly and to greater distances in some directions than in others. Sometimes it seems to contradict entirely some among the early conceptions in which we might have thought that we had the surest hold on reality, as for example that the sun goes round the earth. Those early conceptions are

shown to have been partial but only partial apprehensions of the fact. Science's own early progress has in many matters been made by forming theories, far more subtle indeed than those conceptions of the ordinary mind, but with an even larger element of misapprehension in them, and requiring to be rapidly scrapped. In some respects at least the theories eventually verified present themselves as, in a sense which we can easily grasp, only relatively true. A yet completer view of the truth has to be conceived of as in a sense possible, but sometimes as unlikely ever to be attained by men. In some directions an almost limitless extension of knowledge seems conceivable. In others, progress if any has been slight, and limits, perhaps not sharply drawn but still very appreciable, seem to be set to further progress.

Our whole knowledge of material things, in which along certain lines investigation walks with sure feet, is surrounded by a fringe of questions from which inquiring minds — such as first began to create science — have been unable to refrain, but in which each definite and confident theory put forward seems destined to be punctured. Such are the questions which might seem to be fundamental to all knowledge: What, for example, do we mean by matter, or by space, or by time? Some slight advance is made, for the first crude fallacies that arise are punctured and set aside, but it is very slight and men learn that we can get along without more. On the whole, a great mass of very solid and in many ways serviceable knowledge results; and it may be hoped that it would now seem to anyone absurd to doubt its validity. But it did not always seem absurd. On the contrary, some men of the sort that are responsible for the whole advance early began to doubt whether any portion of our knowledge was really known. Some decided that nothing

could be known; and some carried skepticism a step further and answered that this itself was an assertion which could not be known to be true. It is enough for us that, from the first experimental effort (so to conceive of it) of an infant to take hold of a rattle or a colored ball to the latest successful handling by science of invisible radiations, or of particles a million times smaller than the smallest thing we see, the human mind is progressively extending its partial contact (so to call it) with that vast reality, inscrutably related to us, including us yet distinct from us, of which we each had our first apprehension before we can remember. Those first steps which we have all taken in grasping that there are real things at all were of a kind of which our adult understanding and imagination can conceive no clear account. That the ultimate advance has been in some directions so immense is due mainly to the resolution of men whom their fellows at the time could not follow, as it were, one yard. It remains the "index" of one and another

> mind, forever
> Voyaging through strange seas of thought, alone.

But, to return to the child, the perception of material objects in space (or, more strictly, the indescribable psychic process which develops into that perception) is not the only line along which it wins increased contact with the reality around it. Ever so early there dawns on it the recognition of a person other than itself. Normally that first person is one who loves the child, and whose love at a certain stage the child begins both to recognize and to return. Other persons soon come within its horizon and are gradually distinguished and identified; generally animals come soon upon the scene. Very soon indeed the great and endless business of communicating with and dealing with other persons,

recognized as having intelligences and wills like our own, is well on its way. None of us dreams of doubting that these other persons exist. That in one way they are material things, as bottles and beds and tables are, is certain; that in another way they are not material is equally certain, because we gain much sure knowledge of their ways of thinking and desiring without necessarily having even the very faintest perception of the processes in their bodies to which these things correspond. Scientific psychology had made a good (though soon arrested) start before consciousness had even been located, as it were, in the brain. Knowledge of persons is thus in a way quite distinct from knowledge about their bodily being and its processes; it remains distinct from it, however much it is at some points usefully supplemented by it; and it is obviously — after some primary bodily needs are satisfied — as important as knowledge of matter, if not more so. It is of no use (say) to make gramophones if you cannot persuade some people to buy them. If (remembering that there may be a danger of fallacy in the distinction) we think of this knowledge of persons on, so to speak, their immaterial side, it is in some respects very unlike our knowledge of physics. The stirring of some emotion, sympathy, or antipathy far more marked and conscious than the emotion which does in some degree accompany all perception and thought and action, seems necessary to every exercise of perception, reflection, or will in regard to our fellows. The subject matter of this sort of knowledge and action is in many respects far more various in different individual cases and in each individual case from moment to moment and from year to year than the subject matter of physical science generally is. Our thought concerning persons is in a manner hard to analyze, manifestly more liable to wild error, and

yet manifestly more capable of sure and flashing insight. Its greatest certainties — known for certain by the man, perhaps still more often by the woman, who has them — are often peculiarly inarticulate; not unreasonable, but incapable of being formally reasoned out without great effort, if at all. "I do not like thee, Doctor Fell." Along with all this goes the marked fact that personal knowledge, knowledge about our friend or enemy or about humanity in general, is, comparatively speaking, insusceptible of being conveyed from one man to another with any sort of exactness. It is very bad subject matter for scientific method and system, and for instruction. Nobody, however, can doubt on that account that contact with our fellows is contact with reality.

To finish with the growth of the child: At some early stage natural affection becomes real, soon a conscious force; and at some stage ideas appear which develop in slightly different forms into a sense of duty or a sense of right and wrong. Here, perhaps more noticeably than anywhere else, the phases which different minds go through differ; the process is capable of arrest and delay in some respects in some cases, and this often apparently without ultimate loss; the counteracting influences present in all growth are here peculiarly strong; the fluctuations caused by them are to the end of life very great; the arrival at something which may be called maturity is in most cases relatively late; the progress may be rearoused to great activity after long intervals, at almost any age; it may, apparently, continue to be considerable to the last moment of sane life. So far as it is a matter of knowledge, as to some extent it is, what could be said about its susceptibility to scientific method and to communication to others would evidently be somewhat different from what has been said of our knowledge of matter

and of our knowledge of men. In this connection the doubt whether our ideas correspond with reality has been raised and debated, just as it has sometimes been in regard to physical science, but naturally more often and more intensely. All of us have at some time, and may perhaps at any moment still have, acute accesses of that doubt. Yet any thoroughgoing skepticism is at least as absurd in this as in the other case. Any attempt to persuade one's self that one's happiness, the aim of one's underlying and lasting desires, the fulfillment of one's being (or what not) can be found either on sensual or in any sense on selfish lines, breaks down under the stress of a thoroughly skeptical sifting of it or under the stress of practical occasions. Man cannot escape his privilege as an animal, having — like others of the higher animals, though not always so much as some of them — imperious instincts, directed not to the preservation or enjoyment of the individual but to the preservation of the race, at the cost if need be of utter and cruel individual sacrifice. Nor can he escape his privilege or doom, as by far the most rational of animals, compelled to transmute his instincts into something more potent and more perilous. His unselfish instincts (for, as applied to instinct, the much-debated word "unselfish" is evidently significant and correct) must with him pass into thought and conscious desire, applied or definitely and disastrously failing to be applied over a range very considerably wider than the mere preservation of the species. It is at bottom nonsense (the rational mind cannot for long, when fully aroused, entertain it) to think of this direction of thought and desire as if it strayed into some realm of idle fancy. My frequent obtuseness to delicate or indeed to elementary moral considerations no more stays the operation of what may be called moral law than my

obtuseness in mathematics deflects a shot from a gun. The first moral perceptions of the child and the boldest advance made upon them by a hero or a prophet represent alike the movements of a mind extending its contact with reality.

As a matter of fact, alert and vigorous minds, not only those of genius but those of simple, healthy people, interested in their duty, interested in men and women, interested in the mighty powers of the physical universe, do apprehend or seem to apprehend the facts with which religion is concerned. It makes no more difference in this instance than in that of physical science that their early efforts in these directions have often been very crude. Nor does it make any difference that some people are uninterested, and that some people totally misunderstand the highest experiences of religion. A certain progress, great though fluctuating, can be observed in this regard in the history of the race and in the lives of numberless entirely healthy and sane individuals. Here, more than elsewhere, skepticism has been active, often — as in the case of physics — on the part of men of the very type to whom progress is due. And here again one can now say with some decision that thorough skepticism ends by being skeptical of itself. *Prima facie*, any intelligent glance over the diverse mental activities of our fellows would suggest that here certainly is a direction, perhaps the chief, in which men's minds grasp not vainly after reality.

I shall not attempt to explore any further this region into which I have timidly entered. One can look at the matter from the outside; all of us at times feel genuinely outsiders in this respect, but we cannot, if we are quite honest, declare that anything is the less there because we feel thus. So looking at it, I should observe, in the

first place, where lies the real answer to my question about the value, as evidence of the truth of certain beliefs, of considerations which might at first sight seem only to affect their moral and social utility. What happens in that sort of reflection by which (as I have slightly indicated) men are actually led to become decided Christians, or, having previously been so, are kept so and made more so, is this: Men and women alive to the many elements in life, in the world, in their own inner experience, which stir wonder, admiration, hope, love, become conscious of lines on which innumerable apprehensions of something which we must rationally take as real cohere together, consistently, in some roughly definite creed. Unconsciously they test it all the while by its power of supplying some partial answer to questions "which cannot be put by," and which for that very reason should seem to have no fanciful origin. They test them by their power to suggest lines of duty which, when followed, satisfy; by their correspondence with that to which countless other apparently wiser minds testify; by their observed power, when followed, to make them better, and their no less indubitable power, when disregarded, to leave them worse. Such is the only evidential process by which Christian faith can be put to the proof, or by which (if you make such a supposition) you can put to the proof that more scientific view of the world which you may think would oust Christian faith and replace it; or by which you can make it rationally conceivable that in this region of thought no creed at all can be found and that none matters. And it is a sufficient evidential process — subject to this single observation: that in this direction, even more than in others, the mind that is to learn must observe that a creed *merely* taken from another quite on trust neither is really believed nor, if

believed, would be of the faintest use. This is in harmony with the general process by which knowledge is won. The mind discovers its own health in its contact (necessarily imperfect) with what thereby it inevitably and irrefutably apprehends as an element in the real world.

I would say, moreover, that what I may call the particular religious experiences of the individual mind — liable, no doubt, in each of us to some measure of individual error — are in this matter strictly analogous to those perceptions by which the child learns that there are things and that there are persons, and to those profounder visions by which genius has seen deep into the working of the world's machinery. There is error in them to be eliminated. There is also certainty. I have not myself those experiences of prayer to which the strongest and the sanest minds that I have known have — in due privacy — confessed; much less of vision, such as in certain ages and races has come to some men with unmistakable assurance and to the manifest and amazing benefit of the world. But, writing in perfectly cold blood, remote from any temptation to lament my imperfections, I say deliberately: To doubt that in these things men come in contact with God seems to me an absurdity, which mature thought outgrows.

This now remains to be said, and said with all possible emphasis: The religious apprehension comes first not as an assertion but as a command. Christ does not come to you or to me saying, "I am the Christ." Without explanation He says, "Do likewise"; "Arise and walk." His promise of a fuller light that we shall walk in lies behind this. He would seem (be it reverently said) to be uninterested in my opinion about Him or in yours, but to show an example and to say, "Follow"; to claim service; to claim — as the child's mother claims — the first

faint stirrings of love, before it can be distinctly seen that He is there. Such seems upon the whole to have been the view of St. John.

Difficult as this may be to understand, it is perhaps the chief answer to the question so perplexing to young men: How can I pretend to be a Christian, how can I pray, when so many preliminary puzzles present themselves, of which I cannot honestly pretend to accept another man's ready-made solution? God, it may be, does not present Himself to you as God, but God's service does present itself to you in the ceaseless, generally trivial, opportunities of doing something a little above your ordinary level, something beyond what the world, your class, your business, your boon companions demand. You may become more alive to these calls, or you may become less alive. You can choose. If your choice is once to hear them, you can renew your choice. You can at least take some moments by yourself to strengthen the decision of that choice. If there is a God, He takes these moments as prayer, and doubtless He has His own ways of answering and His own time.

Meanwhile, the first duty is to be sincere toward yourself and the world. Only — since after all you are probably going to let yourself off something on the ground of sincerity — be quite thorough with the sincerity. It is not at all easy. Perhaps this simple reminder is better than any analysis of the very obvious ways in which humbug and cowardice may take one to church or keep one away, or in which fidgety minds may skip or torpid minds drift to one conclusion or its opposite.

But I believe it is in every way helpful to recall that Christ demands sincerity. It is helpful, among other ways, in preventing that agony of religious questioning — attempting to force one's belief and never succeeding

— to which more people than we suspect may be prone, but which surely is not God's desire. This demand for sincerity is a fact about Christ's religion which modern study reads quite clear in the Bible. And it is one of the dark stains on the history of all Churches, for many centuries, that not only ecclesiastics but congregations and crowds of Christians have so often been the enemies of any fearless quest of truth or any straightforward telling of it. Even now some preachers and their congregations speak just as if conformity instead of truth could lawfully be made the primary aim. It would not be fair to say this without adding that the exact parallel holds good in politics and in other walks of life, conceivably even in some scientific pursuits. The fact is that it is harder and more unusual than we sometimes recognize for men to value truth, as such, very highly. That hard and unusual thing Christ demands. It would be slightly inaccurate to say that it was His primary demand, because life must not be artificially simplified by picking out some one element in the right thing and putting it alone; but along with some other things, honest facing of fact was an essential part of that childlike simplicity and singleness of heart which was His primary demand.

It requires a rather considerable study before the meaning of His startling phrase, "I am the truth," or of the equally startling dialogue with Pilate, in the Gospel according to St. John, begins to stand out; but one or two things may be summarily said about all this. There is no trace of His having ever demanded of anyone assent to a proposition which he could not understand and had no reason to think true. He apparently claimed from the doctors of Jewish divinity at least an open mind toward new truths that issued from that divinity. He evidently required of His disciples, at the end, that they

should see clearly what had long been dawning on them. His attitude to people generally was not this. Rather, He demanded fuller reverence of what they did revere; the practical performance of what they did hold right; attention to and retention of teaching which did appeal to them; above all, the response of efficient mercy to what did stir the sentiment of compassion. Of men today, even when reasons good or bad have detached them from a childlike piety, He demands instantly a certain spirit of action, and demands therewith that they go along their way with "a heart that watches and receives."

He did, however, demand "faith," a word which gives men pause. The New Testament applauds faith in a way which is sometimes understood as contrasting it with reason. But faith is assumed to believe something true, so it cannot be intended to contrast it with reason. What was it which the men — Abraham especially — whom the New Testament treats as types of faith were disregarding and setting aside, when they showed their faith? Nothing that was really reasonable, but a number of strong influences which might naturally — not reasonably — have deterred them from undertaking what they did undertake and from persisting in it. These disregarded things included, on the one hand, conventional opinion and the like; and on the other hand all the plausible reasons for disbelief which personal fear and indolence would have suggested to them — two classes of influences which a Greek philosopher would have grouped together as things which create illusion, and which he would have opposed to reason or wisdom. Far from being merely submissive to authority, as a later confused use of the term "faith" suggests, these men of faith showed in the first instance great independence. They showed besides great courage and energy and pertinacity. It should be

added that they showed also a spirit of adventure; they did commit themselves and take personal risks at a time when their friends probably thought that they should still have been making inquiries. These are qualities which Jesus asked of His disciples, and qualities to which Christianity appeals to-day.

Yet on what sort of ground does the supposed virtue of faith commit itself? In the particular case of the disciples we can see clearly enough. We ourselves have experiences on a smaller scale of profoundly felt trust or distrust of persons. It may be based on traits of appearance, manner, voice, speech, too subtle to be well described. It may result from inference so rapid that we (incorrectly) call it "instinctive" or so gradual that we actually forget its stages. But we very seldom regret having been guided by it, and very often regret not having been so.

A personality strangely commanding and lovable got the trust of Simon Peter and his fellows. They went on giving that trust, and it grew. Ultimately, we are told, the slow-dawning conviction broke on Simon Peter that this was, and no other could be, that ultimate leader whom, as Jews, he and his fellows had learned to expect, and to whom, as loyal Jews, they must give their loyalty without stint. It has been the aim of this volume to suggest how from that original loyalty the Christian creed grew.

Now the appeal which Christ can make to us is as different as possible in form from that which He made to those disciples. We cannot see Jesus. We are beset by good influences, pervasive but therefore indefinable. The most definite witness to each of us is, instead of the living Master of life, the witness of some sect or school humanly liable to enervate, warp, narrow, or degrade

Christianity in some degree, to insist on what is at best unimportant, to set up patterns of life which we cannot love, to depreciate and distrust what any healthy man or woman must admire; yet we know — for the indifferent world recognizes — that Christ is greater than all Christians. And there is hardly less difference in the response which we can make to His appeal. Not only in his circumstances but in his whole temperament a modern Englishman contrasts with an ancient Jew. The old Jew at his best was tense; at his worst, horribly fanatical; he could have ecstasies and, it seems, be none the worse for them; his convictions were expressed with great vehemence, with fearless exaggeration of phrase, and with a crude luxuriance of metaphor; his merriment was of a type which could be invited by St. Paul to express itself in psalms; tenderness, homely sense, exact hitting of the nail upon the head, abound in the literature which appealed to him, but they never took a humorous turn. The Englishman, of the kind that we like to think characteristic, is very seldom strung up except for purposes of important action. The extraordinary poetic and imaginative power of which his race has proved itself capable is subtly dependent upon something regarded by others as specially prosaic and matter of fact in the ordinary demeanor of that race; his strongest conviction is often that which he is most shy and reserved in uttering; his profoundest emotions and most genuine reverence normally express themselves by quiet; his warmest kindliness and his most exact justice of mind flourish best in an atmosphere of humor, though all the same that humor must be still in specially sacred moments. On the whole, our specifically religious feeling must have something of the character of a deep, unobserved undercurrent. Our religious thought welcomes a certain indefiniteness and illogicality (falsely

so called) which is a virtue, though it has its defects, and which is connected equally with the practical and with the poetic qualities of the best English minds. Some equivalent difference between the modern and the ancient could be traced in every nation to-day, and should in no case be assumed to be bad. Yet when we recognize the full difference in any possible religious experience between us and the first Christians, the abiding significance of many New Testament ideas only stands out more clearly.

I do not wish to elaborate a parallel which is in general already obvious; but I would wish in conclusion to leave three points clearly marked.

Faith was and is primarily a matter of responding in action — unusual action — to the call of something of which a man is already quite aware and which he cannot honestly doubt. In the Apostles' case it began with the literal following of One evidently, though inexplicably, worth following. In our case, every schoolboy, every man who has ever been a real student, or an athlete, or a good soldier, or a good workman, or what not — and the like with women — has repeatedly been aware of calls of fellowship, calls of sympathy, calls to get out of himself and silently enter on some life a little above the ordinary. It is impossible that he should rationally doubt the authority of those calls. Faith begins in his first energetic and determined response to them. The claim of Christianity is to be the creed and the way of living that are the fullest outcome of that response, long and honestly continued. Those who doubt that claim can patiently test it in life, with the quiet confidence that what they need to know will be clear enough in God's good time.

Faith never did and never can mean that a man should

begin by committing himself in advance to some definite theory of which he has no notion of the proof and perhaps does not understand the terms, though it certainly does demand a very different thing: some reverence for what we must see is worth revering, and some modest deference toward that of which we cannot reasonably despise the authority.

Nevertheless, faith always did and always will exact much independence of the ordinary current of the world's opinion, and of the influences which may for the moment surround us. In indifferent matters fashions are harmless things, and certainly there is no merit in eccentricity. But there are graver things in which not to stand upon one's own feet, but to seek first for the approval of those around us, is the surrender of all real self-respect; and in the gravest things even some seemingly steady tendency of civilization must not be allowed to set the ultimate standard. "How can ye believe which receive honour one of another?" The drift of the world sets at present away from all religion; at other times it has set and it may again set in another direction; but it never set in favor of any great surrender of self to what is truest or best. Christianity calls for a faith which indeed works only by love, but which yet overcomes the world. And whatever be the truth, it will not be truly seen, nor will life be lived in its light, except by those who, however humble, dare sometimes stand alone.

These pages have been much occupied with tracing how a patriotism, once fervently centred upon an insignificant state, ended by doing its part in founding what Augustine called "the most glorious City of God." I am not about to dwell here upon the measure in which, though far less than the old Israel, different nations

to-day, our own not least among them, may conceive themselves the humble custodians of some tradition for which God has His use in the world. But I call to mind, as I close, the lines in which a great public servant, who had faced as much for his own country as any son of any combatant nation in the Great War, said the last word about his own career. Early in 1918 the British Ambassador in Washington, Cecil Spring-Rice, was about to leave that city, superseded. He was a sick man; as it happened, he was to die within five weeks. He wrote thus: —

I vow to thee, my country, all earthly things above,
Entire and whole and perfect, the service of my love;
The love that asks no questions, the love that stands the test,
That lays upon the altar the dearest and the best;
The love that never falters, the love that pays the price,
The love that makes undaunted the final sacrifice.

And there's another country I've heard of long ago,
Most dear to them that love her, most great to them that know.
We may not count her armies; we may not see her King;
Her fortress is a faithful heart, her pride is suffering;
And soul by soul and silently her shining bounds increase;
And her ways are ways of gentleness, and all her paths are peace.

We may not see her King. St. John believed that once and once for all that King had been seen upon this earth, and that his own hands had handled Him. For myself, I believe with all my heart that John was right. Many men much wiser than I can only wonder about it, as well they may. But for him who wonders and for him who believes the same thing is primarily needful — that his own steps be guided within those shining bounds.

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